

## Jippensha Ikku, *Hizakurige*, and Comic Storytelling<sup>1</sup>

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Old men and far travelers may lie by authority.  
—Source unknown<sup>2</sup>

History, literature, and theater specialists who write about the Tokugawa era are surely aware of Jippensha Ikku (1765-1831) and his famous travel comedy series *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* (1802-09).<sup>3</sup> This was one of the first *kokkeibon*, a genre of

<sup>1</sup> I presented earlier versions of some of the ideas in this paper at the Early Modern Japan Network panel “Live from Edo, It’s Saturday Night: Ticklish Tales of Text, Image, and Performance in Tokugawa Japan,” held at the 2008 AAS meeting in Atlanta. For their helpful comments and insight, I would like to extend my warm thanks to Philip Brown, Joel Cohn, Dave Conklin, Hayashiya Somemaru IV, Laurence Kominz, the faculty and staff at Ritsumeikan University’s Art Research Center, and especially, my anonymous reviewers.

<sup>2</sup> Robert William Dent, *Proverbial Language in English Drama Exclusive of Shakespeare, 1495-1616*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984) 512: M567.

<sup>3</sup> Hereafter, *Hizakurige* always implies the *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* series. The title *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige* has been rendered *Shanks’ Mare* (Thomas Satchell, *Shanks’ Mare*, [Tokyo: C. E. Tuttle Co., 1960]), “Down the Tōkaidō on Shank’s Pony” (Timon Screech, *Sex and the Floating World: Erotic Images in Japan, 1700-1820*, [London: Reaktion Books, 1999]), “Travels on the Eastern Seaboard,” (Haruo Shirane, *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology, 1600-1900*, [New York: Columbia University Press, 2002]), “Hoofing It Along the East-Sea Highway” (Adam L. Kern, *Manga from the Floating World: Comicbook Culture and the Kibyōshi of Edo Japan*, [Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006]), and “Two-legged Chestnut Horses on the Tōkaidō,” (Matthew W. Shores, “Travel and *Tabibanashi* in the Early Modern Period: Forming Japanese Geographic Identity,” [*Asian Theatre Journal* 25, no.1 {2008}: 101-121]).

comic fiction for commoners. Specialists are probably also aware of the one-man modern comic storytelling art called *rakugo*, and perhaps its connections to Edo-period popular literature. What they may not be aware of is the degree to which Jippensha Ikku and his work can be linked to comic storytelling. In the pages that follow, I will shine new light on Ikku as a person and writer, showing that he did much to improve his chances at fame, including and among other things, leading for decades a circle of men who gathered for regular storytelling parties. In his lifetime Ikku published around thirty *hanashibon*, “spoken books” holding specially selected short joke tales (*hanashi*) that he and friends performed for one another. Ikku’s involvement in the *hanashi* world put him in position to meet a number of interesting people, mostly other writers, but also *ukiyo-e* artists, professional storytellers, and perhaps some actors. Through a combination of translations and textual analysis I present a clearer picture of who Ikku was, develop a renewed understanding of *Hizakurige*, and insight into its connection to pre-nineteenth-century *hanashi* and travel-themed modern *rakugo* stories.

## Ikku the Writer, Traveler, Travel Writer

Jippensha Ikku is a celebrated early nineteenth century writer-illustrator counted as one of the six *gesaku* greats (*gesaku rokkasen*), but much about his life has remained a mystery. What we know about him today is based largely on what he himself has written in books, and, to a lesser degree, what his contemporaries wrote about him. Jippensha Ikku was born Shigeta Sadakatsu in Suruga province in 1765. His father was police constable (*dōshin*) under the magistrate (*machibugyō*) of Fuchū. In his youth he was stationed in Edo, but soon left for Osaka to begin writing *jōruri* plays and practicing the art of incense burning.<sup>4</sup> His first play, “Battle of Hazama

<sup>4</sup> Suruga is now part of Shizuoka prefecture. Ikku was stationed in Edo by Odagiri Naotoshi (1743-1811), who served terms as magistrate of Sunpu (in Suruga Province) and Osaka, and later took up residence in Edo at age 50, in 1792. There he served as north Edo magistrate until his death. Odagiri was highly trusted by the Shogunate and held the official title Tosa Province Governor.

in the Shadows Under Trees” (*Ki no shita kage Hazama no kassen*), co-written with Namiki Senryū II and others, debuted when he was twenty-five. He returned to Edo five years later, in 1794. The following year he wrote his first book, a yellow-backed satiric picture book (*kibyōshi*) titled *Gleanings in Shingaku Clock Grass* (*Shingaku tokei gusa*), for the famous publisher Tsutaya Juzabūrō. In 1802, Ikku gained fame almost instantly when his travel comedy *Hizakurige* debuted in print.<sup>5</sup> Ikku and his publisher (Murataya Jirōbei) were surely happy his work sold well, but winning fame also meant Ikku would be on the radar of government censors, prepared to prosecute anyone who produced work that might conceivably pose a threat to the “Era of Great Peace.”<sup>6</sup> While we cannot say censors were targeting Ikku specifically, it took just two years in the spotlight for him to have a *kibyōshi* banned, and receive a harsh reprimand of fifty days of house arrest in manacles.<sup>7</sup>

Did conviction cause Ikku to be more careful? The government’s sternness persuaded most to steer clear from blatantly breaking censorship rules, effectively bringing an end to the *gesaku* genres *sharebon* and *kibyōshi*.<sup>8</sup> Still, the priority of writers and publishers continued to be earning money. They responded by creating new formats for expression, namely the *kokkeibon*. *Hanashibon*, another “harmless” genre, enjoyed a major comeback around the beginning of the nineteenth century, as well. As Ikku moved on from *kibyōshi*, he made *kokkeibon*, *gōkan*, and, to a lesser degree

*hanashibon*, his bread and butter.<sup>9</sup> His new works were as absurd and vulgar as ever (e.g., the protagonists of *Hizakurige* repeatedly harass women, lie to children, steal food, and start fights), but they made no direct critique of the establishment and were therefore permitted. *Hizakurige* was especially popular. Each installation of the serial sold well, inspired numerous sequels, copycat books, and professional stage performances.



Figure 1: Jippensha Ikku’s portrait in *Ukiyodōchū hizakurige: shohen* (book 1, 1802). Woodblock print; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

Why was *Hizakurige* so successful? One reason is that Japan’s first travel boom was underway.<sup>10</sup> People were enthusiastic about travel because perpetual war was a thing of the distant past, peace was the new order, and people were quite free to take trips for specified purposes so long as they could afford to do so. Furthermore, decent roads had been built and maintained, and a commercial industry catering to visitors had developed. Literature on travel—*Hizakurige* included—fueled popular interest in taking to the open road; early modern Japanese were fascinated with other cultures, thirsty for knowledge about the unknown; and, no different than today, play in leisure and tourism and its offer of transcendence (from everyday life)

<sup>5</sup> Isoji Asō, ed., *Nihon koten bungaku taikei* [NKBT] 62: *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1958, 1985) 10. See also, Yasutaka Teruoka, *Edo bungaku jiten*, (Tokyo: Fuzanbō, 1940).

<sup>6</sup> *Taiheiki*. Ikku does not seem to have been terribly concerned about censorship, especially considering he wrote his earliest works for Tsutaya Jūzaburō, one of the targets in the hubbub over Santō Kyōden’s *Nishiki no ura*.

<sup>7</sup> Julie Nelson Davis, “The Trouble with Hideyoshi: Censoring *Ukiyo-e* and the *Ehon Taikōki* Incident of 1804,” (*Japan Forum*, vol. 19, issue 3 [2007]: 281-315) 281-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Sharebon* are books of wit and fashion.

<sup>9</sup> *Gōkan* are bound picture books with kabuki and historical drama themes.

<sup>10</sup> I am borrowing this term from other scholars who used it first, such as Constantine N. Vaporis.

provided critical domain for identity formation.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, during the two-plus centuries that Japan was effectively closed to the outside world, countless Japanese of various backgrounds took to the road, most often for pilgrimages or official business. "Pilgrimage" may have been the official purpose listed on documents, but, as scholars have made clear, these trips were often taken for secular purposes. Traveling through Japan was expensive and physically challenging, but the number of people who traveled kept increasing.<sup>12</sup>

Considering the fact many Japanese at the turn of the nineteenth century were consumed with thoughts of travel, Ikku (and his publishers) had every reason to think a vast readership would embrace a comedy such as *Hizakurige*. Public response to his work was proof he was right. Travel guides (*meisho ki*, *meisho zue*, etc.) were so widely circulated by the time of *Hizakurige*'s publication that one wonders if Ikku did not use these as models for his serial. Jilly Traganou classifies *Hizakurige* a "fictional guidebook," but says, "the serial form of the work makes obvious that it was not

meant to be used as a guidebook, but rather as a piece of popular literature."<sup>13</sup> This, and Traganou's point that little attention is given in describing the historical background of the physical surroundings of the road, is well taken.<sup>14</sup> Still, I think *Hizakurige* was meant as a guide. Ikku was aware that readers were not simply interested in history and topography. They were just as eager to know about the sexual and palatal pleasures to be found along the Tōkaidō. *Hizakurige* served as a long running guide to those pleasures, parody though it may be. In a sense, it is a "what-not-to-do-when-traveling" guide. The wild popularity of this fictional guidebook at a time when Japan was experiencing its first travel boom is indication that it, like maps aimed at popular audiences, gave something of value to the countless Japanese stricken with travel fever. In addition to entertainment and escapism, it provided them with information about spaces, places, and subcultures that were often kept hidden in official, or officious, forms of mapping and other more serious printed matter.<sup>15</sup>

Ikku had much insight on matters related to travel since he himself frequently took to the road. Living in two major urban centers and traveling through the provinces brought him in touch with a diverse range of people and cultures. Moreover, Ikku actively sought out different people and cultures, and demonstrated himself to be a diligent note taker while on expeditions, gathering material for his books. This naturally qualified him as popular conveyor of knowledge about that which existed in remote Japan.

Book 1 of *Hizakurige* was inspired in part by a two-week hot springs trip Ikku took to Hakone in autumn of 1801. It was at this point, Nakayama Hisao suggests, that Ikku found a way to shine as an author. Until this point Ikku had produced nothing he was fully satisfied with. It was likely during his trip to Hakone that he came to the conclusion that, rather than keeping *gesaku* at home in Edo, he

<sup>11</sup> See Stephen Wearing, Deborah Stevenson & Tamara Young, *Tourist Cultures: Identity, Place and the Traveller*, (London: Sage Publications, 2010) 43.

<sup>12</sup> Based on numbers in travel journals written in the (mostly mid-) nineteenth century, travelers required around 400 *mon* per day. A journey lasting around two months generally cost more than four *ryō* (24,000 *mon*, roughly enough to feed a family of four rice for a year). Most Edo commoners could not afford this on their incomes alone. Edo commoners (in these cases, wealthy merchants) who could procure means to travel spent an average of 714 *mon* a day; commoners from surrounding areas (farmers) spent around 440 (see Hironori Tanigama, "Kinsei kōki ni okeru Edo shomin no tabi no hiyō: Edo kinkōchi no shomin ni yoru tabi to no hikaku o tsūjite," [Tōyō hōgaku, vol. 53, no. 3 {2010}, 33-50] 49-50). Regarding the physical challenge of travel, travelers continuously complain in their journals about recurring foot pain, as did the Tosa retainer Gotō Einosuke in 1791 (see Constantine Nomikos Vaporis, *Tour of Duty: Samurai, Military Service in Edo, and the Culture of Early Modern Japan*, [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2008] 37).

<sup>13</sup> Jilly Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road: Traveling and Representation in Edo and Meiji Japan*, (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004) 106.

<sup>14</sup> Traganou, *The Tōkaidō Road*, 108.

<sup>15</sup> Marcia Yonemoto, *Mapping Early Modern Japan: Space, Place, and Culture in the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868)*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003) 6.

would do better to take it on a journey, far into the provinces. Instead of producing something only city dwellers would find interest in, he brought forward something much more accessible, universal.<sup>16</sup>

Ikku's work spoke to so many people because it was inspired in part by actual trips he took along a number of major routes, including the Tōkaidō. For example, from the twenty-sixth day of the tenth month to the fifth day of the following month of 1805, Ikku went on a pilgrimage to the grand shrine at Ise. Nakayama believes this particular journey was a field trip Ikku took to gather material prior to the release of *Hizakurige* book 5.1, early the following year. To give an illustration of how serious Ikku could be about his work, there is an account of an affluent man who invited the author to accompany him on a trip, in hopes of being treated to some amusing back and forth resembling his fictional protagonists Yaji and Kita. The man came home disappointed, though. Ikku seemed to care about little more than taking notes on the observations he was making.<sup>17</sup> Ikku's meticulous note taking helped make his work travel-guide quality. Adding to the mix outlandish characters who trek through real landscapes made his work that much more entertaining and memorable.

There are passages in nineteenth-century travel diaries that indicate trekkers had Ikku's work in mind, or were reminded of it, while on the road. In an untitled 1850 diary one commoner writes, "'Okazaki girl' is nothing more than a name. They're nothing but waitress-prostitutes after all." These Okazaki girls, or *yorōshū*, were women who worked as waitress-prostitutes (*meshimori baijo*) at inns in Okazaki, made popular by their appearance—friendly, accommodating, adorable, but not beautiful—in *Hizakurige* book 4.2 (1805). This traveler's commentary illustrates he was disenchanted upon learning Okazaki girls had over the years been made out to be more than they actually were.<sup>18</sup> *Golden Straw Sandals* (*Kane no waraji*,

1813-33), another Ikku long running bestseller, was a model for the 1847 travel diary titled *Kosei dōchūki*, written by a fifth-generation Edo merchant, whose real name is not known.<sup>19</sup> Therein he auspiciously dubs himself "Splendid Roadhome-good" (Medetaya Kijirō), and his companion "Illness-less Smooth" (Tsusuga Nashihē), after *Kane no waraji*'s much more ridiculously-named protagonists.<sup>20</sup>

### Ikku the Comic Storyteller

As mentioned earlier, censors cracked down on the popular *gesaku* genres *sharebon* and *kibyōshi*, to silence their frequent authorial "hole-poking" (*ugachi*), or satirizing flaws in society, policy, or people in power. *Kokkeibon* developed and flourished following the crackdown, but while humor was still the name of the game, it was of a far less satirical and more superficial variety. This has much to do with the fact *kokkeibon* developed alongside professional comic storytelling around the turn of the nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, these share numerous similarities, two being they take up related subject matter, and consist mostly of dialogue. Rakugo tales heard today also share with *kokkeibon* numerous points of comparison.

Thomas Joshua Young says *kokkeibon* "were not simply recreations of rakugo performances, and were not scripts to be used by performers, but tried to get at the phenomenon of characters performing voices."<sup>21</sup> This may be true, but what Young fails

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*bunsetsu kara*," (*Nihon taiiku daigaku kiyō*, vol. 36, no. 2 [2007] 183-196) 189-190.

<sup>19</sup> *Kane no waraji* also served as a model for making a popular sightseeing pleasure course out of the temple circuit of twenty-four sites related to the disciples of Shinran.

<sup>20</sup> Itoko Kitahara, "Kinsei no nikki ni miru tabi to saigai: 19 seki shomin no tabi nikki 'Kosei dōchūki' o chūshin ni," (Travel Workshop Proceedings [University of British Columbia, August 4-5, 2006] 75-92) 84-5.

<sup>21</sup> Thomas Joshua Young, "A Touching Talk: Nineteenth-century Edo Rakugo and the Performance of Language," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Cornell University, 2003) 63. Young makes it clear elsewhere comic storytelling was not referred to as rakugo in the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>16</sup> Hisao Nakayama, *Jippensha Ikku kenkyū*, (Tokyo: Kyōbundō, 2002) 271.

<sup>17</sup> Masahiro Tanahashi, *Warai no gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, (Tokyo: Shintensha, 1999) 86.

<sup>18</sup> Hironori Tanigama, "Kinsei kōki no Ise sangū no tabi ni miru tanoshimikata no ruikai: kantō chihō no shomin ni yoru tabi nikki no



to make clear is that *kokkeibon* would never have become the popular genre it did if authors had not incorporated the comic stories composed for performances at comic story parties (*hanashi no kai*).<sup>22</sup> *Kokkeibon* were not recreations of performances per se, but comic storytelling is certainly at the heart the genre. *Kokkeibon* texts may not have been intended as scripts, but the men who went on to become the first full-time professional storytellers (*hanashika*) found much in them to use on stage.

Jippensha Ikku was an active man to say the least. In addition to being a frequent traveler and practitioner of an array of fine and literary arts, he was also at the center of an energetic storytelling circle that came together for regular *hanashi no kai*. His group was called the *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai*, named for and presumably based at the Eiyūdō publishing house, also known as the Murataya. Since early on in his career, Ikku had a close relationship with the owner, Murataya Jirōbei, who, beginning in 1792, published a good deal of Ikku's *gesaku*. Murataya also published the first installment of *Hizakurige*.<sup>23</sup> Best remembered for his *kokkeibon* and *gōkan*, Ikku also put out around thirty *hanashibon*, books that typically featured his group's best *hanashi*. Ikku generally wrote and illustrated his *hanashibon*, and he also wrote forwards for and contributed *kyōka* poetry to his friends' *hanashibon* as well.<sup>24</sup>

At *hanashi no kai*, the idea was to generate material for future publications, *hanashibon* and otherwise, but these were not simply work meetings at which members hashed out new ideas. First and foremost they were parties for diversion and play (*asobi*), to eat, drink, and carry on, and sometimes with hired professional entertainers. Considering Ikku's central role in his *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai*, it becomes clearer not only that he was a fun-loving man (legend has it he was quite a drinker), but also

that he enjoyed the practice of literary exchange with like-minded people. He was an enthusiastic composer and performer of comic stories, and his experiences at *hanashi no kai* had a substantial impact on his comedy writing.

Tayamachi Noriyuki has produced a comprehensive list of sources that likely inspired scenes in *Hizakurige*. He agrees, comic storytelling was a major influence on Ikku, whose source material includes premodern works such as *kyōgen* plays, and a profusion of scenes pulled from Edo-period genres such as *ukiyo-zōshi*, *sharebon*, *kibyōshi*, other *kokkeibon*, and popular theater. It is *hanashi*, however, that stand out as Ikku's most important source.<sup>25</sup> While some of these *hanashi* predate the Genroku period (1688-1704), most were published in the roughly thirty year period before he began publishing *Hizakurige*, during the An'ei era (1772-81) and later. The following are examples of such *hanashi* prior texts. The first excerpt is titled "Sleeping" (*Netari*), the second "Idiot Seller of Clam Meat" (*Baka no mukimi*), each is matched with the corresponding scenes from *Hizakurige*.

#### EXAMPLE 1

"Sleeping" (*Netari*) in *Mindful Children (Kiki dōji, 1775)*

Two palanquin carriers chant in lighthearted unison until they reach Namiki. They come to Kaminarimon, and, just as they are about to let down the pole for a rest, they hear from inside the palanquin a cough.

PASSENGER: The carriers I had yesterday were such fashionable fellows, and they did the most remarkable thing! "We're going to stop here for a drink," they said. "Master, by all means, do join us." And when I told them no, they all but forced the liquor upon me. I wonder if there will not be more carriers like the ones I had yesterday. The men today don't seem like complete boors, but...

And so the passenger goes on, talking to himself. The carriers continue on, only this time snoring

<sup>22</sup> Depending on the time and case, early modern comic stories were called *waraibanashi*, *karukuchi*, *otoshibanashi*, *kobanashi*, or simply *hanashi*.

<sup>23</sup> Nakayama, *Jippensha Ikku Kenkyū*, 10.

<sup>24</sup> These and Ikku's other works can be found listed in timeline format in Tanahashi, *Warai no gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, 233-266, and in more comprehensive detail in the previously cited work.

<sup>25</sup> Noriyuki Tayamachi, "Jippensha Ikku no 'Hizakurige' to rakugo no kanren o megutte," (*Tōyō daigaku daigakuin kiyō*, no.18 [1982]: 179-197) 180-189.

loudly as they go.<sup>26</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 2.2 (1803)

TRAVELER: This horse is so slow it's making me sleepy. The horse I took yesterday from Mishima, now, that was a fine horse. And the pack-horse driver was a splendid man. It costs 150 *mon* from Mishima to Numazu, but, when I paid to get on the driver said, "Master, you could fall off at any moment riding a swift horse like this. And you won't be able to get a wink of sleep either. You probably only chose me to be kind. What a pity. No, there's no way I can take your money for the ride." And when we arrived at Sanmaibashi shortly thereafter, he said, "Master, I bet your back hurts from the saddle. Please, come down and have a rest. If you're a drinking man, the tab's on me," and he gave me 150 *mon*! Once we arrived in Numazu he said, "I would like to take you to the next stage, but my horse prances. I'll get another horse; please ride that one. The fare will be on me." And right there he gave me another 150 *mon*! Now, there couldn't possibly be a packhorse driver as good at that one.

The driver leading the traveler's horse simply walks on, snoring and mumbling as he goes.<sup>27</sup>

#### EXAMPLE 2

"Idiot Seller of Clam Meat" (*Baka no mukimi*) in *Thousand-ri Wings* (*Senri no tsubasa*, 1773)

When an idiot seller of clam meat comes around and somebody calls out, "Idiot!" he responds, "That's right!" The innkeeper next door hears this and decides to give it a try for himself. He calls out, "Idiot!" and gets the answer, "That's right!"

INNKEEPER: What a fool! Let's try it again. *Idiot!*

<sup>26</sup> Sadao Mutō, ed., *Hanashibon taikei* 10, (Tokyo: Tokyo Dō Shuppan, 1979) 122. Another *hanashi*, "Snoring" (*Ibiki*) in *Purse of Strange Tales* (*Chinwa kanezaifu*, 1779), is quite similar to *Netari* (see Mutō, *Hanashibon taikei* 11, 244).

<sup>27</sup> Yukihiro Nakamura, ed., *Nihon koten bungaku zenshū* [NKBZ] 49, (Tokyo: Shōgakukan, 1975) 143-4.

SELLER: That's right! *You're* the idiot!

INNKEEPER: Okay, you've got me.<sup>28</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 8.1 (1808)

From there they [Yaji and Kita] go down Tanimachi Street, and from Andōji to Babanohara.<sup>29</sup> They wander along, talking, and soon find themselves crossing the bridge at Tenmabashi. Truly, the Yodo River runs wide, and the boatmen sing as they punt their boats along to and fro. There are also pleasure boats outfitted with shamisen and drums, and *hayashi* music plays as they cruise along. From atop the bridge, a passerby stops and shouts down.

MAN ON BRIDGE: Ahoy there jackasses! Go ahead, squander all your money away! The bill collectors will still show up to pester you for what you owe when you're home. Then you'll all be in tears! You're all a bunch of idiots! *I-diot!*

MAN ON BOAT: What's that? *You're* the idiot!

MAN ON BRIDGE: Ah, what are you blabbing about? Jackass idiot!

MAN ON BOAT: Oh, you think you're hot stuff, do you? Why don't we just have ourselves a contest to see who the bigger idiot really is? Now, we couldn't lose that one!

MAN ON BRIDGE: Okay you jackasses; think I'm going to lose to you? Well, I'm a bigger idiot than all of you!

He goes too far, ending up right where his opponent wants him.

MAN ON BOAT: Oh, okay, that's fine! Now everybody knows you *are* the biggest idiot...<sup>30</sup>

The *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* comes up frequently in Japanese works on Ikku, but this storytelling club is usually only mentioned in passing and it is therefore difficult to get a clear picture of Ikku's *hanashi no kai* activities. Piecing together the bits, we are able to come to a few conclusions; the *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* included at least sixteen members, most of whom were *gesaku* writers;

<sup>28</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikei* 9, 219.

<sup>29</sup> The front entrance (west side) of Osaka Castle.

<sup>30</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 473. Readers may refer to Addendum I for more examples.

there were a couple artists in the group; Ikku's *hanashi no kai* was most likely based at the Murataya, the publishing house mentioned above; and, since some members' names appear in a number of unrelated works put out by the Murataya, we can assume Ikku met some of his *hanashika no kai* friends through his publisher. At this point little is known about these men aside from their names. The list includes Kanwatei Onitake (1760-1818), a *gesaku* writer and pupil of Santō Kyōden (1761-1816) and, later, Takizawa Bakin (1767-1848); and Kitagawa Tsukimaro (years unknown), an *ukiyo-e* artist and pupil of Utamaro (1753-1806). Another member was Yūji, none other than the publisher himself, Murataya Jirōbei.<sup>31</sup>

Details surrounding how Ikku's *hanashi no kai* were run are disappointingly unclear. Based on the frequency at which Ikku published *hanashibon*, we can be sure his group convened at least once a year between the years 1802 and 1829, a few years before his death.<sup>32</sup> Ikku published an average of one *hanashibon* per year, but his group was most active during the Kyōwa (1801-4) and early Bunka (1804-18) years.<sup>33</sup> While the *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* was most likely based at the Murata publishing house, there is evidence (e.g., the preface of Ikku's 1804 *hanashibon* titled *Funny Stories: Waist-side*

<sup>31</sup> Utamaro and Tsukimaro received punishment along with Ikku in 1804 for representing scenes of the sixteenth-century warrior-general Toyotomi Hideyoshi in commercial prints. The list of *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* members also includes Keirō Gotoku, Hakugindai Ichimaro, Biya Issaku, Gusha Ittoku, Ōhara Ichijo, Itchikusai (this may actually be Ikku himself), Rikatei Tōyū, Hamanoya Shūdō, Sanritei Tōshi, Tanpō, Yūhiko, Sakekiki, and Bakakichi. Most are presumed to have been *gesaku* writers, or men with other connections to the literary world.

<sup>32</sup> In 1802 Ikku published his first *hanashibon* *A Nest Egg of Funny Stories (Otoshibanashi hesokuri kane)*; in 1829 he published *Funny Stories: Kite in Disguise (Otoshibanashi yatsushi tobi)* and *Funny Stories Unparalleled (Hanashi no daigokujō)*.

<sup>33</sup> Nakayama, *Jippensha Ikku kenkyū*, 211. Ikku's *hanashibon* tend to be released at the same time or shortly after installments of *Hizakurige* and other *kokkeibon*.

*Purse (Otoshibanashi koshi kinchaku)*) the group also held *hanashi no kai* at establishments in the Yoshiwara pleasure district.<sup>34</sup>

Ikku appears, at least in his own *hanashibon*, to have been the most prolific composer/performer of *hanashi* in the group. In the cases that members' names are listed beside *hanashi*, most are credited with just one or two while Ikku has a good deal more. For example, in the 1805 *hanashibon Fuku-suke's Funny Stories to Drive Out Demons (Oni soto Fikusuke banashi)*, Yūji is credited with two stories and listed as "presenter of auspicious remarks" (no doubt given this honor because it is New Year, and he is the publisher of the work), others have one or two stories each, and Ikku has thirteen.<sup>35</sup> The following are two *hanashi* appearing in the publication. Both are performed regularly in rakugo repertoires today, albeit in much longer and somewhat altered versions.

"Blowfish Soup" (*Fugu jiru*)

Some friends get together. One has come into some blowfish of all things, only it looks suspicious and he cannot eat it. He asks someone try it first, but not a single person wants to. A man in the group speaks up.

FRIEND 1: Hey, why don't you take some and give it to the beggars who sleep on the bridge?

FRIEND 2: Indeed! And we go back and have a look at some random time. If nothing's out of the ordinary, it'll be safe for us to eat.

He agrees, prepares *fugu jiru*, and sets out to give some to the beggars.

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: Hey you, want some *fugu jiru*, or what?

BEGGAR: Oh that is very kind of you!

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: If you want some, go get something I can pour this into.

And so the beggar does. The man waits a while, returns to have a look, and nothing seems to be out of the ordinary.

MAN WITH BLOWFISH: Okay everyone, the

<sup>34</sup> Nakayama, *Jippensha Ikku Kenkyū*, 103-4.

<sup>35</sup> These thirteen *hanashi* also appeared in Ikku's first *hanashibon*. Mutō therefore does not present them a second time his section on *Oni soto Fikusuke banashi* (in *Hanashibon taikai* 19, 319-25).

coast is clear! Come on, gather around. Eat hot-pot to your hearts' content!

Afterwards, they all agree, it was wonderful. Later, they walk past the same bridge.

FRIEND 1: Now, was that good *fugu* or what?

FRIEND 2: Absolutely delicious.

BEGGAR: Hey, did you gentlemen happen to already have your meal?

FRIEND 1: We sure did!

BEGGAR: So long then, I'm going to go eat mine now!<sup>36</sup>

#### "Pounding Rice Cakes" (*Mochi tsuki*)

It is already the time of year to pound rice into *mochi*. A certain doctor is out of work, and therefore cannot afford to even make rice cakes.

DOCTOR: Sansuke, what has happened? Why is it that I'm the only one who cannot do *mochi tsuki*? This is quite disgraceful. Can't you come up with a plan?

SANSUKE: I've got a good idea. I'll just take my rear end out, and you go ahead and whack it with the palm of your hand. Do that and it will sound just like you're pounding rice cakes, and people in the neighborhood won't know the difference.

DOCTOR: Indeed! Fine idea!

Inside the house the following morning, the doctor gives Sansuke's bare bottom a good whacking. At first, Sansuke is able to endure the pain, but, as his rear end turns purple, he can no longer bear it.

SANSUKE: Hey, Master!

DOCTOR: What's wrong?

SANSUKE: Please, can we do something that's a little easier on my ass?<sup>37</sup>

Inverting the class system—real figures in government were officially off limits, of course—and making smart or regular people look silly were recurring themes in *hanashibon*. Travel and related matters such as cultural and linguistic differences

were especially popular during Ikku's lifetime. The next two *hanashi* are from his 1817 *hanashibon Joke Tales: Pleasantly Drunk on New Year's Sake* (*Otoshibanashi tosokigen*).

#### "A Man from Kamigata" (*Kamigata mono*)

A man from Kamigata comes to Edo for the first time. Although people say there is no place like Edo, the man soon finds himself in the middle of a busy crowd of people. Walking along he recalls that he has heard for some time that Edo is a place one should not let their guard down. He hands his cloth-wrapped bundle to the man accompanying him.

MASTER: Here, Sansuke, Edo's no place to let our guard down. Be sure not to let anybody get away with that bundle.

And off they go, and while on their way:

MASTER: Indeed, Edo is a booming city! Sansuke, do you still have that bundle?

SANSUKE: Yes, I do.

MASTER: With so many people in such a big place, it will pay to be cautious. My, what a lively place this is! Sansuke, you still got that bundle? I can't seem to stop worrying about it.

SANSUKE: I'm terribly sorry, it was just stolen.

MASTER: What! Stolen? Well, at least I can put my mind at ease now.<sup>38</sup>

#### "Travel Companions" (*Tabi no michizure*)

The saying goes, "travel is better with companions and the world with kindness." And so a group of travelers walks along with this in mind, one *ri* then two, talking together without a single worry.<sup>39</sup>

COMPANION 1: Hey, what province are you from?

COMPANION 2: I'm from Enshū.<sup>40</sup> How about you?

COMPANION 1: I'm from the province right next to yours, Sunshū.<sup>41</sup> How about you over there?

<sup>36</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikēi* 14, 60. The title of the modern rakugo version is "Blowfish Hotpot" (*Fugu nabe*).

<sup>37</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikēi* 14, 63. The final line is actually "let's just do kettle-rice or something for the next batch (i.e., no more pounding). The title of the modern rakugo version is "Butt Mochi" (*Shiri mochi*).

<sup>38</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikēi* 18, 110.

<sup>39</sup> The adage in Japanese is *tabi wa michizure, yo wa nasake*.

<sup>40</sup> The western part of modern day Shizuoka prefecture.

<sup>41</sup> The central region of modern day Shizuoka prefecture.

Where are you from?  
 COMPANION 3: Huh? Me? I'm from Tsukeshū.  
 COMPANION 1: I've never heard of a province  
 called Tsukeshū before.  
 And when asked just where Tsukeshū might be:  
 COMPANION 3: It's the province of glue!<sup>42</sup>



Figure 2: *Kamigata mono* (l) and *Tabi no michizure* (r) in Jippensha Ikku's 1817 *hanashibon Joke Tales: Pleasantly Drunk on New Year's Sake (Otoshibanashi tosokigen)*. Woodblock prints; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

We cannot be certain, but it appears Ikku had connections with other *hanashi no kai* than his own, including Utei Enba's (1743-1822) group, *Mimasu ren*.<sup>43</sup> This group—named after the triple wooden drinking box crest that men in the Ichikawa Danjūrō line wear on their kimono—also effectively served as the official fan club for Danjūrō V (1741-1806), a close friend of Enba's and regular participant at this particular *hanashi no kai*.<sup>44</sup> If

<sup>42</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikai* 18, 118-9. *Nikawa no kuni*, a fictitious province that serves as a metaphor for the group's friendship. In other words, they stick together like glue.

<sup>43</sup> Shinji Nobuhiro, *Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1986) 14. Nobuhiro surmises that Ikku even received formal backing from Enba.

<sup>44</sup> Nobuhiro, *Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka*, 9-12. Enba and his group had close friendships with other Edo actors, too, including Danjūrō VII, Nakamura Nakazō, Ichikawa Omezō, and Onoe Matsusuke. They also cheered on Osaka actors Asao Tamejūrō and Ichikawa Ichizō.

Ikku's *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* was similar to Enba's *Mimasu ren*, it would mean the following: members usually met privately but occasional gave public performances (dramatic readings of texts is probably more accurate); they sometimes convened in secret, to avoid censorship; *hanashi no kai* were held on numerous occasions throughout the year, the most important being the New Year's gathering.<sup>45</sup>

Thumbing through *hanashibon* of different eras, one soon notices *hanashi* become longer over time. By Ikku's day they are normally longer than those in collections compiled a century earlier, and they consist of much more dialogue. Still, each *hanashi* tends to be relatively short, what we today might consider a paragraph or less, but sometimes two paragraphs or more. Nobuhiro Shinji thinks men at Enba's *Mimasu ren* parties may have been allotted around twenty minutes each.<sup>46</sup> If this indeed were the case, members would have had to come prepared with several *hanashi* to fill their slots, or give longer performances based on one or two, or more. Unfortunately, even with scores of extant *hanashibon*, it is hard to do more than guess at what the specifics may have been because they tend not offer information about things such as time allotment, or exactly how *hanashi* were performed. *Hanashibon* do tell us, however, what tropes were popular at a given time and often indicate who the most talented (or senior) storytellers/writers were. Some *hanashibon* include illustrations of *gesaku* writers bowing, dressed as professional *hanashika*, but these are generally taken as tongue in cheek *mitate* parodies.

Literary men were the mainstay of *hanashi no kai* in the early nineteenth century, but, as we have seen, non-writers were involved too.<sup>47</sup> Some were originally comb makers, pawnbroker apprentices, kabuki actor impersonators, etc., and some came

<sup>45</sup> The *Mimasu ren* called their New Year's gatherings *Hanashi zome*, or First Funny Stories (of the year).

<sup>46</sup> Nobuhiro, *Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka*, 21.

<sup>47</sup> Literary men were the mainstay of these Edo-based *hanashi no kai*, but this was not necessarily the case in Kamigata, where *hanashi no kai* were often organized and attended by men who were not artistic professionals.

from merchant or samurai families. A few had their sights set on making live comic storytelling a lucrative, full-time career. These “amateurs” (*shirōto*) did not stand out in the early stages of *hanashi no kai*, but some eventually made names for themselves as professional entertainers. Those with exceptional talent took *hanashi* beyond *gesaku* and salon art, steering *hanashi no kai*—or their own versions of it—onto a more public, commercial track. These men are remembered today as the first “*shokugyō* (career) *hanashika*.” The group includes Sanshōtei Karaku I (1777-1833), Asanebō Muraku I (1777-1831), San’yūtei Enshō I (1768-1838), Hayashiya Shōzō I (1781-1842), Sen’yūtei Senkyō I (d.1829), Katsura Bunji III (d.1857), and Kikutei Jugyō (years unknown).<sup>48</sup> These men usually presented *hanashi* daily at *yose* for a fee, texts were done away with—at least in audience view—and reading stands were also thrown out in favor of elevated daises, or *kōza*.<sup>49</sup>

Ikku was close with some of the first *shokugyō hanashika*, one being Sanshōtei Karaku, who opened his own *yose* on the grounds of the Yanagi Inari Shrine in 1798. He is believed to be the first to open a *yose*, and is therefore credited with initiating the *yose* boom that marked the dawn of a new era for professional comic storytelling.<sup>50</sup> Ikku and Karaku probably spent time together at *hanashi no kai*, and the former—just as Shikitei Sanba (1776-1822) frequently had—publicized confectionaries the latter was selling in his store.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Shogei Konwakai, and Osaka Geinō Konwakai, ed., *Kokon tōzai rakugoka jiten*, (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1989) 25-33. According to this source, the number of *hanashi* in the professional repertoire was raised to some 800 in 1808.

<sup>49</sup> Nobuhiro, *Rakugo wa ika ni shite keisei sareta ka*, 23-25. *Kendai*, a short desk of sorts, is still used in the Kamigata style for some stories, but not to place texts on.

<sup>50</sup> Shogei Konwakai and Osaka Geinō Konwakai, *Kokon tōzai rakugoka jiten*, 26. Karaku may have sparked a *yose* boom at this time in Edo, but that he opened the first is arguable. People had been performing in more or less fixed spaces for years prior to this.

<sup>51</sup> Tanahashi, *Warai no gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, 154-5. The advertisement being referred to can be found in the 1809 *gōkan* titled *Fukushū*

Ikku had another good friend in Karaku’s pupil, Hayashiya Shōzō, who lived for a time in the same neighborhoods Ikku did (Hasegawa-chō and Tachibana-chō), and became one of the most famous *hanashika* of their day. Like Ikku, Shōzō published



Figure 3: Sanshōtei Karaku I (l) in his 1823 *hanashibon* *New Stories, True Edo Style* (*Edomae shinwa*), and Hayashiya Shōzō I (r) in his 1831 *hanashibon* *A Grove of New Funny Tales* (*Shinsaku waraibanashi no hayashi*). Woodblock prints; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

*gōkan* and *hanashibon*, based on original ghost stories (*kaidanmono*, also *bakemono banashi*). He narrated these at his *yose*, located on a major thoroughfare in Nishiryōgoku.<sup>52</sup> The playful camaraderie these men shared may be best illustrated by the late Edo period rumor that Jippensha Ikku stuffed his clothes with fireworks while confined to his deathbed, as a joke on those who would be attending his cremation rite. This actually originated in one of Shōzō’s stories.<sup>53</sup>

Ikku’s friendships with professional *hanashika* make sense considering not only that he himself was an amateur storyteller, but also that he, like other *gesaku* writers of his day, produced books to be performed. Reading aloud was the mode of

*jinkau ki*. Here, “store” (*mise*) most likely refers to Karaku’s *yose*.

<sup>52</sup> Tanahashi, *Warai gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, 151-152.

<sup>53</sup> Tanahashi, *Warai gesakusha Jippensha Ikku*, 155.



consumption that partially dictated the production of texts.<sup>54</sup> Mingling with *hanashika* and heading the *Eiyūdō hanashi no kai* were two more ways Ikku found inspiration as he worked to make books enjoyable for readers. In the process he had a hand in transforming, as Howard Hibbett puts it, “little anecdotes of the Edo joke books into miniature comic dramas that elevate low humor to the realm of consummate art.”<sup>55</sup> Friendships that Ikku and other writers enjoyed with professional *hanashika* benefited everybody involved. Writers got professional entertainers’ input on material, which could be adapted for playful fiction; *hanashika* got help creating more substantial material, much needed for shows at the *yose* that began popping up everywhere in urban neighborhoods.

### Yaji and Kita

*Hizakurige* protagonists Yaji and Kita became cultural heroes almost as soon as the book had begun selling. It is not surprising, then, that Ikku’s work inspired all kinds of sequels, spin-offs, and copycat works, including scores of modern rakugo stories, their common denominator typically being a Yaji-Kita-like traveling duo. Their endless list of flaws notwithstanding, Ikku’s heroes continue to this day to maintain a special place in the hearts of Japanese readers.<sup>56</sup>

By the Edo period, it had long been common practice in Japanese literature to poke fun at the backwardness of provincial locals. Likewise, travelers from large population and culture centers were painted as “normal” if not smarter and more refined than their rural counterparts. During the seventeenth century, however, writers such as Matsuo Bashō (1644-1694) and Kaibara Ekiken (1630-1714) began treating provincials notably differently, in a more objective, and at times, solemn manner.<sup>57</sup> About a hundred years later, while

he does not necessarily write about provincials with reverence, Jippensha Ikku was portraying them as quicker witted if not more intelligent than travelers. Yaji and Kita, travelers and representatives of an imagined center (Edo), are made the butts of nearly every comic scene. Humor being focused on the city-dwelling traveler instead of the provincial bumpkin appears to be one more ingredient that helped Ikku win fame.

*Hizakurige* was not the first travel book to adopt a comic style, nor were Yaji and Kita the first picaresque duo featured in a travel comedy.<sup>58</sup> But early examples differ from *Hizakurige* in a number of ways. For example, Tomiyama Dōya’s *Chikusai monogatari*, first published around 1621, is more of a comic travel poetry journal. Some think Chikusai and his counterpart may be the prototypes for Yaji and Kita. This take is understandable for obvious reasons, but Chikusai’s humor is far more satirical—one moment directed at others, the next at his own position in life as quack doctor—and his counterpart is little more than his shadow. In addition, unlike the later Yaji and Kita, Chikusai has no hometown pride; he hates his native Kyoto and insists on leaving.<sup>59</sup> More commanding of reader attention, however, is the parallel Dōya draws between Chikusai and Ariwara no Narihira’s *mono no aware* (pathos)-saturated plights.<sup>60</sup> In one more example of early travel

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Plutschow discusses these and other men who witnessed and recorded realities concerning Japan’s hinterlands and its inhabitants. These were the forerunners to what he calls the Edo-period Enlightenment of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

<sup>58</sup> Traganou points out early examples written by Tomiyama Dōya and Asai Ryōi in *The Tōkaidō Road*, 108.

<sup>59</sup> Laurence Bresler, “The Origins of Popular Travel and Travel Literature in Japan,” (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1975) 189, 191, 196-7.

<sup>60</sup> Granted, it was probably more than enough to tickle the funny bones of early Edo-period readers that a quack doctor of Chikusai’s standing would be likened to the legendary courtier Narihira, alleged hero of the poem-tales that make up *Ise monogatari*. *Chikusai* was written at a time when

<sup>54</sup> Young, “A Touching Talk,” 122.

<sup>55</sup> Howard Hibbett, *The Chrysanthemum and the Fish: Japanese Humor Since the Age of the Shoguns*, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2002) 37.

<sup>56</sup> *Hizakurige* has been included in literature curricula at Japanese public schools for years.

<sup>57</sup> In *A Reader in Edo Period Travel* (Folkstone, Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental, 2006) Herbert

comedy, if we may call *Tōkaidō meishoki* (c. 1658-60) such, author Asai Ryōi insists on giving readers lesson after lesson on landmarks, lore, and local histories. Consequently, the tone remains more intellectual than comical, and the antics of the traveling duo amount to little more than comic relief.<sup>61</sup> In contrast, Ikku's comedy is nonstop as Yaji and Kita head southwest on the Tōkaidō, running away from their debts and other troubles in Edo.



Figure 4: Yaji and Kita with farmer. *Tōkaidōchū hizakurige: nanahen-ge* (book 7.2, 1808). Woodblock print; ink on paper. Courtesy of the ARC Collection, Art Research Center, Ritsumeikan University.

While trekking across the Japanese mainland Yaji and Kita self-identify as *Edokko*, or “native sons of Edo.” They are not actually Edo natives, though. It turns out Yaji and Kita are former lovers who hail from a small town in the provinces, from which they also ran.<sup>62</sup> These wannabe city slickers

*Ise monogatari* parodies were popular, so this kind of humor was quite common.

<sup>61</sup> A translated excerpt of *Tōkaidō meishoki* and full translation of *Chikusai* can be found in Bresler, “The Origins of Popular Travel and Travel Literature in Japan,” 296 and 219, respectively.

<sup>62</sup> In *Sex and the Floating World*, 270, Screech comments on the homosexual references and puns that abound in *Hizakurige*. “The story” he says, “is not pornographic, but its premise is sex: the two heroes... are lovers... who come up to Edo and make it their home together before embarking on

most likely identify as *Edokko* because they, like many people in Japan at this time, are caught up in the campaign of Edo-centrism, which involved mapping Edo as the central cultural space against a variety of peripheries.<sup>63</sup> So caught up are they that not once in *Hizakurige* do Yaji or Kita claim to be from anywhere but Edo. While trekking in the provinces, they proudly assume the roles of *Edokko* know-it-alls, which only adds to the humor each time they fail. Yaji and Kita's characters are set quite similar to the half-baked connoisseur (*hanka-tsū*) of *sharebon*, who believes himself refined and claims that in title but in fact is not.<sup>64</sup>

Yaji and Kita use their previous Edo residency as an excuse to act arrogantly and bully countless people as they travel hundreds of miles down the Tōkaidō on foot. The way they act shows they think any person not able to at least claim ties to Edo is of a lesser breed. What makes this otherwise un-funny business comical is that Yaji and Kita are nothing they claim to be. They are unremarkable commoners who would never make it far in a stylish place such as the Yoshiwara. They are neither chic (*iki*) nor connoisseurs (*tsū*), but are too thick-headed to know it. In actuality, however, they are quite weak and do not mean any real harm in their mischief. Perhaps it is these last two details that kept early modern readers in the provinces from feeling as though they were being laughed at, and therefore inclined to dislike Yaji and Kita. Quite the opposite, readers can hardly help feeling sympathy for, opening their hearts to, and cheering on these travelers who were underdogs from the start.

John Mertz is right that *Hizakurige* is entertaining because, “in every scene and at every juncture, Yajirobei and Kitahachi are at play with nuances of social being that differentiate them from the people they meet,” but I disagree that readers are simply “plopped down at its sidelines... to observe the story's action only from a distance.”<sup>65</sup> We must recall the book's intended audience, and the manner in which they read. Ikku did not intend *Hizakurige* to

their travels.”

<sup>63</sup> Kern, *Manga from the Floating World*, 25.

<sup>64</sup> Nakayama, *Jippensha Ikku kenkyū*, 271.

<sup>65</sup> John Mertz, “Close Encounters of the First Kind: Jippensha Ikku, Kanagaki Robun, and the Literary Construction of National Identity,” *Asian Cultural Studies*, vol. 22 [1996]: 43-58) 46.

be read quietly; he intended it to be read out loud, as an amusing performance event, just as he may have experienced reading parts of it with friends at *hanashi no kai*. Ikku went to much trouble to write his heroes and provincial characters with authentic, entertaining dialogue. Reading—bringing this text to life—was clearly enjoyable for early nineteenth-century readers. It still is fun today. *Hizakurige* was anything but a passive experience for readers.

Ikku's work served as an outlet for people to picture themselves in scenes with (or as) Yaji and Kita, traveling to place after non-fictional place. *Hizakurige* may have even given people a sense of assurance that they too could survive and even enjoy long, arduous journeys. After all, if characters as slipshod as Yaji and Kita could make it hundreds of miles in straw sandals through Japan's coast towns and mountains, could not readers do the same?

These are a few reasons that professional *hanashika* took *Hizakurige* and like works to the stage during the nineteenth century and into modern times. As we shall see in the section that follows, the stock characters of rakugo "travel stories" are quite similar to Yaji and Kita. They, too, exhibit innate weaknesses, which only serve to make them more human. On the surface they are loud-mouthed know-it-alls, but audiences are well aware this is not who they really are. The truth is, they are defenseless, and, at their core, good-hearted people.

### ***Tabibanashi*: Rakugo Travel Stories**

The popularity of travel and travel literature—particularly Ikku's bestselling series—made it easy for full-time *hanashika* to sell *tabibanashi* throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>66</sup> Some storytellers, such as Miyako Kitchō (active 1818-44), are remembered especially for performances of *Hizakurige* itself. There is little consensus that *tabibanashi* protagonists are based on Yaji and Kita, but they are clearly the same type of people: careless troublemakers who mean no real harm; know-it-alls who know nothing; insensitive men whose mouths constantly get them into trouble.<sup>67</sup> Though

early versions of *tabibanashi* (in *hanashibon*, etc.) predate Ikku's work, *tabibanashi* told today tend to have a certain *Hizakurige* flavor. *Tabibanashi* feel like performances, or extensions, of *Hizakurige*.

Modern *tabibanashi* have been dated to the 1890s, but this is more likely a reflection of when the Kamigata *hanashika* Sorori Shinzaemon II (1842-1923) collected them.<sup>68</sup> It may be true that some of these rakugo stories would have been lost without Shinzaemon's work, but it is incorrect to begin the history of *tabibanashi* with him, or his master Katsura Bunshi I (1819-74), credited with composing the classic *tabibanashi* titled "The Thirty-Bushel Barge" (*Sanjukkoku*), or even Kyoto-based Miyako Kitchō (years unknown), remembered for his performances of *Hizakurige* and publishing in 1830 the spin-off *hanashibon Storytelling Chestnut Horses on a Pilgrimage* (*Okagedōchū hanashikurige*).<sup>69</sup> To be sure, by Sorori Shinzaemon II's time at the end of the nineteenth century, some *tabibanashi* had been undergoing processes of development for more than a century.<sup>70</sup>

1969) 13, think Yaji and Kita are the models, but Chiaki Uehara in "*Hizakurige: rakugo to no kanrensei*," (*Komazawa tandai kokubun* 8 [March 1978]: 93-102) 98, feels differently.

<sup>68</sup> Heinz Morioka, and Miyoko Sasaki, *Rakugo, the Popular Narrative Art of Japan*, (Cambridge, Mass: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990) 125. Morioka and Sasaki cite Watanabe Kin in reporting Shinzaemon collected travel stories and put them into their present series form at the end of the nineteenth century.

<sup>69</sup> Maeda Isamu says Kitchō may have been the pioneer (*senben*) of Kamigata *tabibanashi* (see *Kamigata rakugo no rekishi*, [Osaka: Sugimoto Shoten, 1959] 65). Hideichirō Uemura reports that Kitchō gave performances of *Hizakurige* (see *Rakugo keizu*, [Tokyo: Meicho Kankōkai, 1974, 1929] 104). *Okagedōchū hanashikurige* can be found in Mutō, *Hanashibon taikai* 15, 308-25.

<sup>70</sup> To use the modern rakugo story *Sanjukkoku* (also known as "Sanjukkoku Ferry, Passageway of Dreams" [*Sanjukkoku yume no kayojiji*]) as a case in point, Sadao Mutō points out a similar but much shorter version of this story, "The *Sanjukkoku* Night Ferry" (*Sanjukkoku yobune*), appearing in two parts, first in the 1843 *hanashibon Master of Old, Old Comic Tales* (*Mukashi mukashi hanashi*

<sup>66</sup> *Tabibanashi* are also commonly referred to as *tabi (no) neta*, or *tabi (no) mono*.

<sup>67</sup> Akihiro Satake and Jun'ichi Mita in *Kamigata rakugo (jō kan)*, (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō,



Figure 5: A *sanjukkoku* vessel and vending boat in “Yodogawa” (c. 1834) by Utagawa Hiroshige (1797-1858). From the series *Kyōto meisho*. Woodblock print; ink and color on paper. Courtesy of the James A. Michener Collection, Honolulu Academy of Arts (HAA 24124).

The abundance of *tabibanashi* in Osaka-based Kamigata rakugo is one thing that sets it apart from its Tokyo-based counterpart. Uehara Chiaki, who categorizes Kamigata *tabibanashi* into the groups “*meishoki*-style” and “*Hizakurige*-style,” says there is a natural explanation for the cornucopia of *tabibanashi* in the Kamigata repertoire, and relative paucity thereof in Tokyo rakugo.<sup>71</sup>

*Edokko* were introverted; they thought any place outside of Edo was merely countryside, that no place could be as good [as Edo].

*no kai*), then its sequel (*nihen*) the following year (see *Teihon rakugo sanbyakudai*, [Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2007] 188). These were published when Katsura Bunshi was coming of age as a *hanashika*, so it is plausible he performed a version of one or both, or even had something to do with its evolution, but we also have to recall that much earlier, in *Hizakurige* 6.1 (1807), Ikku presented a similar scene set aboard a *sanjukkoku* night ferry. This *Hizakurige* installment has in turn been linked to “The Burdensome Passenger” (*Noriai meiwaku*) in the 1774 *hanashibon Great Collection of Early Spring Stories* (*Risshun hanashi taishū*, see Tayamachi, “*Jippensha Ikku no ‘Hizakurige’ to rakugo no kanren o megutte*,” 186). For a translation of *Noriai meiwaku*, see Addendum I, Example 5.

<sup>71</sup> *Meishoki* are guidebooks to famous places published since the early Edo period.

*Edokko* [therefore] did not care a great deal for taking trips. If *Edokko* were centripetal, then people from Kamigata were centrifugal... They wanted to see and experience things, and tended to think other places might have something good to offer... Hence, it is natural there are more rakugo travel stories in Kamigata.<sup>72</sup>

It is not true that all people from Edo disliked traveling in the early modern era, nor is it correct to say everybody native to Kamigata was fervent about long journeys on foot. Nevertheless, Uehara points to real problems embedded in the historic tension and rivalry and characteristic differences between the residents of these places.<sup>73</sup> This is a matter for another study though. If Uehara is right about one thing, it is that there are many more *tabibanashi* in the Kamigata repertoire.

Contemporary Kamigata rakugo master Hayaishiya Somemaru IV (1949-) considers *tabibanashi* indispensable to his art for a number of reasons. In addition to calling to mind the travels of Yaji and Kita, they serve as wonderful windows to the past, teaching listeners about historical geography and an array of culture. *Tabibanashi* are also important to the art because they are traditionally used for *hanashika* training (*shūgyō*). Since protagonists in these stories are constantly in motion, and come into contact with any number of characters, narrating *tabibanashi* gives fledgling *hanashika* the opportunity to practice various scenarios without having to explore character psychology in much depth.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Uehara, “*Hizakurige: rakugo to no kanren-sei*,” 100.

<sup>73</sup> Shigeru Ekuni believes a “Tokyo complex,” especially noticeable in the arenas of big business, professional sports, and performing arts, continues to affect people in modern Japan. He half-jokingly reports that Osakans give an “Osaka nationalist” response when asked about the matter (see *Koten rakugo taikai* 8, [Tokyo: San’ichi Shobō, 1969] 217).

<sup>74</sup> Somemaru Hayashiya, *Kamigata rakugo saijiki*, (Osaka: Nenshōsha, 1999) 102-3. *Hanashika* in training are called *zenza* (lit. first seat) because they appear in shows as warm-up acts. Traditionally, *zenza* would narrate sections of *tabibanashi* as

In his school (*ichimon*), Somemaru continues the tradition of implementing *tabibanashi* into the curriculum of his pupils in training. One of the first exercises he begins with is a routine called “striking,” (*tataki*), which is an excerpt from the first installation of the *tabibanashi* series “Journey to the East” (*Higashi no tabi*).<sup>75</sup> For anybody who knows *tabibanashi*, the *tataki* sequence is quite memorable. Therein, *hanashika* insert loud, rapid strikes—on a *kendai* with a *hariōgi* and *kobyōshi*—between cadence-like sections of narrative.<sup>76</sup> *Tataki* serves as an entertaining presentation of stops along a major route between Osaka and Nara, and effectively places listeners in the role of traveler.

*TSU POPO PON!* (four quick strikes)

The minute you leave Osaka you’re in Tamatsukuri. Here you find two teahouses belonging to Masuya Yoshibē and Tsuruya Hidejirō.

*TSU POPO PON!*

This area is called “two-teahouse town.”

*TSU POPO PON!*

You pass some time here exchanging cups of fine *sake* with your friends, here to see you off.

*TSU POPO PON!*

And now you’re on your way, on an unhurried and enjoyable two-man journey.

*TSU POPO PON!*

audiences came into *yose*, ending as soon as there were enough people in the audience to begin the show proper. The linear nature of *tabibanashi* makes stopping at any point possible.

<sup>75</sup> The beginning of *Higashi no tabi* consists of the stories *Tabidachi* (Departure), *Niuriya* (The Nimono Stop), and *Shichido gitsune* (Fox of Seven Disguises), and these together make up the longer story *Ise sangū kami no nigiwai* (Pilgrimage to Ise and the Gods’ Festivity). These can all be found in Beichō Katsura, *Beichō rakugo zenshū* 6, (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1982) 36-72.

<sup>76</sup> The *tataki* exercise, adapted from the more serious-themed narrative art *kōshaku*, is supposed to help young *hanashika* acquire proper rhythm, enunciation, and projection. *Hariōgi* is a fan or fan-shaped object wrapped in paper or leather used for keeping beat in music/voice training. *Hariōgi* are also referred to as a *tataki*. *Kobyōshi* are two small wooden blocks, always kept on *kendai* regardless of story.

Hey now, here we go! Okay, okay!

*TSU POPO PON!*

You go from Nakamichi to Honjō, and after Tamatsubashi you find yourself in Fukae.<sup>77</sup>

*TSU POPO PON!*

They say if you’re going to buy a *kasa*, get one at Fukae. There’s a song about Fukae specializing in these sedge hats.

*TSU POPO PON!*

They’re called *Fukae-gasa*, but they’re actually quite shallow.<sup>78</sup> You each get one, put them on, and are on your way. To the east, to the east!

*TSU POPO PON!*

After Takaeda you pass Fujii Teahouse, Miku-riya, Nukata, Matsubara, and Toyura.<sup>79</sup> Then, standing right before you, none other than the Kuragari Pass.<sup>80</sup>

*TSU POPO PON!*

Ascend 18-*chō* and you’re at the summit. Don’t forget to make a water offering to the mountain deity.<sup>81</sup>

*TSU POPO PON!*

You can still see here a stone tablet inscribed with the Bashō haiku:

*Though called Kuragari*

*You can see as far as the Akashi horizon*<sup>82</sup>

*TSU POPO PON!*

Legend has it this place was originally called the Kuragaeri Pass; because the slope here is so steep those with horses had to change saddles.<sup>83</sup>

*TSU POPO PON!*

From Ose you pass Sunajaya and Amagatsuji,

<sup>77</sup> These are places leading east from Tamatsukuri, southeast of Osaka Castle.

<sup>78</sup> Pun on Fukae (*fukai*, deep).

<sup>79</sup> Today Takaeda is called Takaida, and Nukata is Nagata. These are places in modern-day Higashi Osaka, leading east.

<sup>80</sup> Today found along the Ikoma-Shigi Skyline Drive, a couple miles south of Mount Ikoma’s summit.

<sup>81</sup> Approximately 6,440 feet, or 1,965 meters.

<sup>82</sup> *Kuragari to / ihedo akashi no / oki made mo.* Matsuo Bashō composed this poem on his way from Iga Ueno to Osaka, where his pupils were in conflict. Note the play on place names Kuragari (darkness) and Akashi (light).

<sup>83</sup> *Kuragaeri tōge*, or Saddle-slip Pass.

ending up at a fork in the road.<sup>84</sup> To the right you see Yamato Koriyama, and to the left is, yes, Nanto, also known as Nara!

TSU POPO PON!

Nanto is written with the characters “south” and “capital.”<sup>85</sup>

*The ancient capital Nara’s eight-petalled cherry blossoms*

*Today bloom in nine-petalled profusion.*<sup>86</sup>

Now, isn’t this a lovely poem that’s been passed down?

TSU POPO PON-PON!<sup>87</sup>

Shortly after the *tataki* bit, the sightseeing protagonists of *Higashi no tabi*, Osaka townsmen (*chōnin*) Seihachi and Kiroku—Seiyan and Kikō for short—head out from Nara. The former suggests they play a game of capping (*atozuke*), because, after all, “it’s no fun to walk along in silence.” The following section exhibits old Japanese word play at its finest, complete with references to Japanese literature classics.

KIKŌ: Seiyan, what’s *atozuke*?

SEIYAN: Come on, you know, it’s that game *shiritori*.

KIKŌ: Huh? What you scoop up and throw trash away with?

SEIYAN: That’s *chiritori*, dummy! *Shiritori* is the game where we incorporate the last part of whatever the other person says. Basically, all we have to do is use it to start our own phrase. So, if I start off with something like, “the tie that binds a couple, is none other than a...” you just have to start with something that begins with “a.”<sup>88</sup>

KIKŌ: All I’ve got to do is say something that starts with an “a”?

<sup>84</sup> Today Ose is called Oze-*chō*, just south of Ikoma City; Sunajaya is in modern-day Tomio; and Amagatsuji is located a station south of Saidaiji on the Kintetsu Kashihara Line.

<sup>85</sup> *Minami* and *miyako*, respectively.

<sup>86</sup> *Inishihe no / Nara no miyako no / yahe-zakura / kefu kokonohe ni / nihohinuru kana*, by Ise no Tayū. Poem 61 in *Ogura hyakunin isshu*.

<sup>87</sup> This is a translation of the version in *Kami-gata banashi: Hayashiya Somemaru no sekai* (Osaka: Yoshimoto Kōgyō, 2008) DVD #2 of 3.

<sup>88</sup> *Somosomo imose no hajimari wa*.

SEIYAN: That’s right. Look, if you can’t figure it out, just cheer me on by chanting “*a kora kora!*”<sup>89</sup> Try to jump in whenever you think you can. Okay, here I go! The tie that binds a couple is none other than a...

KIKŌ: *A kora kora!*

SEIYAN: A child! Smart-alec, a cow he couldn’t sell.<sup>90</sup>

KIKŌ: *A kora kora!* Hey, if he can’t sell cows, he’d better try horses!

SEIYAN: Come on, don’t say such dumb things! Couldn’t sell the night snow, so snow piles up.<sup>91</sup>

KIKŌ: *A kora kora!* Hey, I bet ice in the passing night is colder than snow!

SEIYAN: Kikō!! Would you at least play the game right? Piles up, pain of parting, love it has to be. *A kora kora!* Be-cause the head will not work, neither will the tail.<sup>92</sup>

KIKŌ: *A kora kora!* Say, if they do happen to work, what should we to do?

SEIYAN: One, two! Tale of Tōda Hidesato, the Fujiwara rice bag.<sup>93</sup> *A kora kora!* Baggage of the bumpkin Komachi, hundred years old.<sup>94</sup> *A kora kora!* Old little shop, can’t make a dime.<sup>95</sup>

KIKŌ: You know, that Komachi couldn’t turn a

<sup>89</sup> This, like *a yoi yoi*, is a filler that, when exuberantly shouted between passages, helps sustain tempo during songs and wordplay games such as this one.

<sup>90</sup> *Wa > warabe kozashi ushi uranu*. Hereafter “>” indicates links/progression in the game.

<sup>91</sup> *Uranu > uranu bosetsu ni tsumoru yuki*, a play on *Hira no bosetsu* (The evening snow in Hira).

<sup>92</sup> *Tsumoru yuki > yuki ki mo chiku chiku ai rashi ya; ai rashi ya > rasha [kashira] ga mawaranya, o ga mawaranu*; a saying that means, “if a leader is no good, neither will his/her people be.”

<sup>93</sup> *Mawaranu > mawaranu Tōda Hidesato*, a reference to the tenth-century military general Fujiwara no Hidesato, also popularly referred to as Tawara (straw sack) no Tōda.

<sup>94</sup> *Tōda Hidesato > sato no Komachi no momotose*, a play on *Satoba Komachi*, a *nō* play attributed to Ze’ami’s father, Kan’ami (1333-84).

<sup>95</sup> *Momotose > motose no usui koakinai; motosen* (also called *gen no ji sen*) is a coin that was minted in Osaka during the years 1741-45.



profit if she tried, nothing but loss!

SEIYAN: One, two! Dime-pinching shopkeepers, fat on boiled tasteless fare.<sup>96</sup> *A kora kora!* Fairly fat only daughter, that girl Osome.<sup>97</sup> *A kora kora!* Oh some [Osome] fate to dye [die], here on Suma shore.<sup>98</sup> *A kora kora!* Sure [shore] enough Ōsuke, lived to a hundred-six.<sup>99</sup> *A kora kora!* Six times craving love, fading in and out of sleep.<sup>100</sup> *A kora kora!* Sleepy love? Come along, for some sweet sake.<sup>101</sup> One, two! Sake sweet, yes you'll drink, now let me have your cup!<sup>102</sup>

KĪKŌ: Sake cup, ha! Better yet, a teacup!

SEIYAN: Hey Kiyan, where'd you get that teacup?<sup>103</sup>

KĪKŌ: I grabbed it when we were taking a break at that last teashop.

SEIYAN: Dammit, I wish you would quit doing such dim-witted things! Teashops are set up for groups of five, and groups of ten. They'll be in

<sup>96</sup> *Akinai* > *akinai mono no nie futori*; a play on *ajinai* (flavorless, bland) *mono no nie futori*, a phrase that refers to people who eat only the mundane (tasteless) in order to have (boil) a large amount.

<sup>97</sup> *Futori* > *futori musume no Osome*, a play on *hitori musume*, referring to Osome, Aburaya Tarōbē's only daughter (who also worries she may be pregnant [*futori*]) in Tsuruya Nanboku IV's 1813 kabuki play *Osome Hisamatsu ukina no yomiuri*.

<sup>98</sup> *Some* > *some tote koko ni Suma no ura*, a reference to a line in the climactic *kuse* scene of the Zeami play *Atsumori*, and to other famous Suma exiles in Japanese literature, most notably *Genji monogatari*. *Some(ru)* means "to dye."

<sup>99</sup> *Suma no ura* > *Noura Ōsuke hyaku mutsu*, a reference to late-Heian military general Miura no Ōsuke Yoshiaki (1092-1180), who appeared in *Heike monogatari* as a brave warrior that dies in battle on the side of Yoritomo. An implausibly 106-year-old Ōsuke appears in the kabuki play *Ishikiri kajiware*, based on the 1730 *ningyō jōruri* play *Miura no Ōsuke kōbai tazuna*.

<sup>100</sup> *Hyaku mutsu* > *mutsuru mutsuru to koi kogare*, a play on *mutsu* (six) and *utsura utsura*, a state in which one repeatedly dozes off and wakes.

<sup>101</sup> *Koi kogare* > *koi kogare kozare amazake*.

<sup>102</sup> *Amazake* > *amazake nomaso choku dashare*.

<sup>103</sup> Kiyan is another nickname for Kiroku (Kī-kō).

trouble if they're missing even one cup.

KĪKŌ: That's what I thought too, so... I've got five more here... four here... and this one. Perfect right? I have enough for a party of ten!<sup>104</sup>

Seiyan and Kīkō bear a striking resemblance to Yaji and Kita, who are also keen on word play and guilty of their own acts of petty thievery.<sup>105</sup> Scenes such as this one, which exhibit decontextualization of the classical with the popular (and vice-versa) and incorporate a plethora of homophonic word play, abound in *Hizakurige*. These—essentials of *kyōka* poetry humor—are the nuts and bolts of both *Hizakurige* and rakugo.<sup>106</sup> While some maintain Seiyan and Kīkō are no more than the Kamigata rakugo versions of Yaji and Kita, others do not feel comfortable settling on the *Hizakurige* protagonists as models.<sup>107</sup> Such divergence is understandable since it is difficult to determine if one preceded the other and, moreover, they can both be connected to an earlier tradition of travel-themed stories (i.e., *hanashi* in the early modern sense). Scrutinizing modern *tabibanashi* may not put us closer to answering questions regarding origins, but it helps further illustrate how closely *Hizakurige* and comic storytelling are related.

The list of *tabibanashi* reminiscent of *Hizakurige* goes on, and includes stories such as "Buying a Nun" (*Amagai*), "The Nimono Stop" (*Niuriya*), and *Sarumaru*.<sup>108</sup> The story *Yajirō*, needless to say, is named after Yaji of *Hizakurige*.<sup>109</sup> In this rakugo, the compulsive liar protagonist makes up ridiculous stories, and

<sup>104</sup> This translation is based on the excerpt in Satake and Mita, *Kamigata rakugo (jō kan)*, 14-15.

<sup>105</sup> For example, in book 2.2 Kita sneaks into a Kanbara inn, its staff busy with a large group of important customers, to pilfer food.

<sup>106</sup> This is Shirane's description of *kyōka* poetry humor in *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 256-7.

<sup>107</sup> See footnote 67.

<sup>108</sup> Alternate titles, respectively, "Three-person Journey" (*Sannin tabi*), "Two-person Journey" (*Ninin tabi*), and "Master Sarumaru" (*Sarumaru dayū*).

<sup>109</sup> Alternate title "Yajirō the Liar" (*Usotsuki Yajirō*).

declares himself fearless traveler following a journey to Kyoto. In “The Gion Festival” (*Gion matsuiri*), a traveler from Edo gets into a heated argument with a Kyotoite.<sup>110</sup> Conflicts such as these, between ineffectual travelers and provincial locals, are only too predictable in *tabibanashi*. But, in the vein of *Hizakurige*, no one ever gets seriously hurt, and it is almost always the provincials who come out on top. This is true in the story “List of the Well-to-do” (*Chōja banzuke*), too.



Figure 6: Hayashiya Somemaru IV (1949-) on stage at the Tenman Tenjin Hanjōtei (*yose*) in 2011. Photo by author.

*Chōja banzuke* is based on parts of *Hizakurige* and earlier stories such as “Shop for the Wealthy” (*Kanemochi mise*) in the 1776 *Bird Town* (*Tori no*

*machi*).<sup>111</sup> In this *tabibanashi*, two traveling *Edokko* come to a distillery in Kyoto and bully the head clerk (*bantō*) when they find he is not willing to sell them a small amount of *sake*. The *bantō* is not necessarily an intelligent man, but, by the end of the story, he is able to turn things around on the travelers, making them the butts of the humor.

EDOKKO: [*In Edo dialect*] Sell us some, won't you? It'd make us happy if you could just do that.

BANTŌ: [*In Kyoto dialect*] How much would you like?

EDOKKO: Yeah, okay, give us about a *shō*.<sup>112</sup>

BANTŌ: Come again?

EDOKKO: One *shō*.

BANTŌ: Oh, respectable men of Edo, I'm terribly sorry, but I couldn't possibly sell you just one *shō*. You see, this is a distillery I run here.

EDOKKO: Fine, we'll take three *shō* then.

BANTŌ: Whether it's two *shō* or three *shō*, it's really a pain to prepare such a small amount...

EDOKKO: Well then, how much *will* you sell us?

BANTŌ: Right... You see, this is distillery, so a small amount would be something along the lines of a horse load, or a cartload.

EDOKKO: How much comes in a horse load?

BANTŌ: A horse load? A horse can carry about 80 *shō*.<sup>113</sup>

EDOKKO: Huh! How about a cartload?

BANTŌ: I think you could probably load up around 500.<sup>114</sup>

EDOKKO: And if we wanted to load up a damn boat!

BANTŌ: Oh, a boat? I think you could transport a little over 560, or so...<sup>115</sup>

EDOKKO: Oh get off it already! You think we want to buy that much, you son-of-a-bitch?

BANTŌ: I'm sorry?

EDOKKO: Ah, just shut up! Any amount we ask for, you'll just try to sell us more. You're just trying to make asses out of us, aren't you? Hey, look at who's talking to you and listen to what

<sup>111</sup> Takehiro Yasuda, and Tōdai Rakugokai, eds., *Rakugo jiten*, (Tokyo: Seiabō, 1969) 296.

<sup>112</sup> Approximately 1.8 liters.

<sup>113</sup> The actual line is “two four-*to* casks.” One *to* is approximately 18 liters.

<sup>114</sup> 50 *to*.

<sup>115</sup> Fifty-six *to*.

<sup>110</sup> Alternate title “Gion Festival” (*Gion kai*).

they say! See us? Yeah, we're *Edokko*! And we're on a journey here! Even if we did pay you to load up a damn horse with *sake*, you think there's any way we could drink it all as we traveled down the road? You damn *untsuku*!<sup>116</sup> If it's too much of a hassle for your distillery here to do such small business, you say so with a polite mouth! Just say you can't handle it, you *untsuku*! You just don't have a clue, do you? *Untsuku*!<sup>117</sup>

As we can see, the *Edokko* issues the *bantō* a harsh verbal whipping (*akutai*). The *bantō* does not (or pretends not to) understand the Edo word *untsuku*, and subsequently misinterprets it to mean "rich man" or "millionaire." He proceeds to question the *Edokko* about their "odd way" of speaking and this causes them to react with even more silly intimidation tactics and bravado. The story draws to an end when the two *Edokko* make their leave, steaming mad. The *bantō* is not yet through with them, though. He chases after them, calling from behind.

BANTŌ: Hey!! Masters of Edo!! Wait!

EDOKKO 2: *Aniki*, look who's trying to catch up with us! I bet he found out what *untsuku* means and is coming after us for revenge.<sup>118</sup>

EDOKKO: Oh, come on, it doesn't matter if he comes after us now. We're not indoors anymore; we can make a run for it if we need to. Come on, quit fidgeting already! [To BANTŌ] Hey there, what's the matter *untsuku*?

BANTŌ: Masters of Edo!

EDOKKO: What do you want?

BANTŌ: Gentlemen, I just wanted to say, once you get back to Edo, be sure to work as hard as you can, so you can become reputable *untsuku* like me.

EDOKKO: What the hell are you talking about? We can't stand stupid *untsuku*.

BANTŌ: Well then, I guess there's nothing to do if you're born to be poor.<sup>119</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Edo dialect for fool, idiot, dumb ass.

<sup>117</sup> Ekuni, *Koten rakugo taikei* 4, 254-5.

<sup>118</sup> Literally, older brother. A term of endearment or respect used for an older in-group male.

<sup>119</sup> Ekuni, *Koten rakugo taikei* 4, 263. *Chōja banzuke* is the Tokyo version of the Kamigata

*Niuriya*, a final example, bears a resemblance to a scene in *Hizakurige* 3.1.<sup>120</sup> This *tabibanashi* is also linked to early works including "Fool" (*Utsuke*) in the 1623 *hanashibon Laughing Off Sleep (Seisuishō)*.<sup>121</sup> *Niuriya* too is part of the *Higashi no tabi* series, coming after the *tataki* and capping game excerpts presented above. It is occasionally narrated together with the story that follows in the sequence, "Fox of Seven Disguises" (*Shichido gitsune*). Here, Seiyon and Kīkō decide to make a stop to eat after the latter repeatedly complains about his hunger. The first place they come to is a *niuriya*, in this case a small mountain dwelling specializing in *nimono*.<sup>122</sup> Once they have taken their seats inside, Kīkō seems to forget all about the fact that he is hungry. He is distracted by the opportunity to poke fun at the local man standing before him, to complain about his countryside establishment, and the poor dishes it has to offer. After a good deal of teasing and banter, Kīkō decides on an order of *Kōya-dōfu*, though he pushes his luck by mixing special requests with snide remarks.<sup>123</sup>

KĪKŌ: Tell us, what've you got?

OLD MAN: Let's see here... I have some *bōdara*.

How about some of that?

KĪKŌ: *Bōdara*... No, eating *bōdara* would be like preying on my own kind. It won't do to have people saying, "oh look, that *bōdara* is eating *bōdara*." Maybe I'll have that next time I pass through, whenever that could be.<sup>124</sup>

story *Untsuku zake*, another installment of the *Higashi no tabi* series.

<sup>120</sup> See Addendum I, Example 2 for a partial translation of the *Hizakurige* scene.

<sup>121</sup> Mushū Ui, *Rakugo no genwa*, (Tokyo: Kadokawa shoten, 1970) 335.

<sup>122</sup> Gently simmered, seasoned foods. Examples of *nimono* popular today include *niku jaga*, *chikuzen ni*, *kabocha no nitsuke*, and *hijiki*.

<sup>123</sup> *Kōya dōfu* is a seasoned dish made with freeze-dried tofu. It was originally frozen in the cold of winter by the monks at My Kōya. After it was thawed it was allowed to dry and later reconstituted with water.

<sup>124</sup> *Bōdara* (dried cod [here, in a boiled dish]) is also a term that, in kabuki dressing rooms, meant something similar to *daikon yakusha*, or an actor

OLD MAN: Okay fine, how about *okara* then?  
 KĪKŌ: Oh no, we've been eating that crap for the  
 past ten days, since we started our trip. It's made  
 my eyes turn red, and my ears grow long.<sup>125</sup>  
 OLD MAN: Oh come now.<sup>126</sup>

In this story, too, we find urban travelers entering a countryside setting where they assume it certain they can outwit their slow, provincial counterparts. Once again we see this supposition backfire. The old man in *Niuriya* may not be the quickest-thinking person in the world, but he not only has it in him to endure a barrage of jokes and insults, he is able to hold on until the end, beating the travelers at their own game. As the old saying originally went, "better the last smile than the first laugh."<sup>127</sup>

## Conclusion

Jippensha Ikku made a number of wise moves that ensured he would be famous, and in the bargain won a prominent place in literary history. He took *gesaku* outside of its Edo home into the provinces, where many Japanese were interested in traveling; he himself spent time on trips and took

with little or no artistic talent. In Bunsei and Tenpō eras (1818-44) *bōdara* was a popular expression used to describe people who were as good as worthless (*yaku ni tatanu mono*). KĪkō is applying self-deprecating humor here.

<sup>125</sup> Red eyes and long ears are a playful reference to albino rabbits, commonly fed *okara* (soybean fiber, left after making tofu). Dry, red eyes are also a symptom of dehydration, caused by frequent bowel movements or diarrhea, a result of over-consumption of dietary fibers. *Okara* is made up of more than fifty-percent dietary fiber.

<sup>126</sup> This translated excerpt is based on a 1997 transcript posted on a rakugo fan's personal homepage.

<<http://homepage3.nifty.com/rakugo/kamigata/rakugo51.htm>>. Accessed 2 June 2012. See Addendum II for a full translation of a 1938 version of *Niuriya*.

<sup>127</sup> A proverbial expression recorded by English naturalist John Ray in 1678. See "last laugh, to have the" in Christine Ammer, *The Facts on File Dictionary of Chichés, Second Edition*, (New York: Facts on File, 2006) 237.

meticulous notes about remote Japan; he devised entertaining characters that readers could sympathize with if not feel close to; he incorporated into his work an array of material from comic sources; for at least thirty years he performed *hanashi* with other artists in his *hanashi no kai*, in a sense testing material before it would be released in book form. The list goes on and is an important key to understanding why Ikku stands out as excellent, and gives good reason for his placement in the *gesaku rokkasen*.

Anyone who hears even one *tabibanashi* narrated and reads *Hizakurige* at least in part is bound to feel a sense of déjà vu. Perhaps because it predates modern rakugo, the immediate assumption is that *Hizakurige* was the model. As shown above, it is more appropriate to view both as products of a world where popular literature and oral storytelling went hand in hand, where texts were meant to be read out loud, or performed. The relationship between comic storytelling and *Hizakurige* is therefore a much more correlative than causal one. Ikku's activities as an amateur storyteller, his friendships with others enthusiastic about storytelling, his publication of around thirty *hanashibon*, and his repeated reliance on this genre for source material all serve to shine light on his love for, and *Hizakurige*'s correlation with, comic storytelling. Furthermore, it explains his choice to use everyday language and avoid incorporating private matters (*gakuya ochi*) that could rarely be understood by outsiders. Ikku witnessed firsthand the success of *hanashika* as they redirected comic stories at the masses, and taking a similar approach he became a star.

## Addendum I: Selected *Hanashi* and Corresponding *Hizakurige* Scenes

We see in the following examples that Jippensha Ikku referred to earlier *hanashi* when writing his bestseller *Hizakurige*. In these and other cases, Ikku filled out the *hanashi*, making them funnier or more absurd.

### EXAMPLE 1

In the *hanashi* and *Hizakurige* excerpt that follow, the parallel is men who live in extreme poverty

discussing apparel. The humor lies in the fact these men are prouder or more narcissistic than people who are much better off.

“Straw Mat People” (*Komo kaburi*) in *Good at Listening* (*Kiki jōzu*, 1773)<sup>128</sup>

Two or three beggars gather and split up the food they have left. Another comes up wearing a straw mat of multiple bright colors.

BEGGAR 1: Hey everyone, nice work! Could you share a little with me?

BEGGAR 2: Oh, you Chō, is it? Here, come on over. My, you’re wearing something else!

BEGGAR 1: Oh yeah, I just found this; but it’s a little loud for my taste.<sup>129</sup>

“Brocade” (*Nishiki*) in *Stories of Today* (*Kotoshi hanashi*, 1774)

A beggar has decided to return to his hometown, and is now making preparations. One of the beggars in his group comes up.

BEGGAR 1: Sir, where are you off to?

BEGGAR 2: I’m going home.

BEGGAR 1: In that case, sir, that colorful straw mat you have on won’t be enough to keep you warm. I’ll give you my mat as a farewell gift. Please do wear it.”

BEGGAR 2: Don’t be ridiculous. You expect me to wear a [plain] straw mat? When going home, one must go in brocade!<sup>130</sup>

“The Outcaste’s Straw Mat” (*Hinin no komo*) in *Light-mouthed Tales: Paper of Five Colors* (*Karukuchi goshikigami*, 1774)

BEGGAR 1: Hey Hachi! You’ve gotten yourself a fine straw mat there. Why on earth are you cutting it up?

<sup>128</sup> *Komo kaburi* is a term that refers to beggars.

<sup>129</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikei* 9, 66-7. *Ora ni mo chitto kure no kane* (Could you give a little to me?) is a play on “bell at dusk,” juxtaposed with the colorful (*hade*) mat.

<sup>130</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikei* 9, 147. Here a colorful straw mat becomes a poor man’s brocade, proof to those back home he has made something of himself out in the world.

BEGGAR 2: No, you see, I just tried it on, but it’s too long and all I look like is a damn doctor.<sup>131</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 2.1 (1803)

YAJI: Kitahachi, let’s take a break before heading out.

They head into a teahouse. In the garden, they find a group of homeless porters huddled around a woodstove, trying to keep warm.<sup>132</sup> Some are wrapped in bedding; others have on packing paper that has been sewn together. Some even drape straw sleeping mats and capes made of red oilpaper. Another joins the group, a bamboo pipe clenched in his teeth.

PORTER 1: That damn bum, Akakuma! That piece of trash got himself a long haul all the way to the summit.

PORTER 2: Hey, I bet that guy’s stolen forty or fifty *mon* worth of *abite* from me.

These so-called ‘long hauls’ are worth about 600 *mon*, and *abite* are tips.<sup>133</sup>

PORTER 3: Well, that’s just fine, but get a load of what this guy here is wearing! He’s acting as if the *sake* trademarks on his straw cape are actual crests!

CAPED PORTER: I finally got myself one of these yesterday at the Kōshūya in Odawara. But when I put it on the hem was so long it made me look like a damn doctor.

NAKED PORTER: No, you’re just resourceful. And that’s why you get to wear what you want. See, I’m the only one here without any clothes. Old lady Rattle-mouth told me she would give me an old umbrella, and that I should strip it down and wear it. That idiot. I’d just look like a wild pig. When I told her there’s no way I would wear anything like that, she said, “here, wear this then,” and gave me a straw mat. And, just listen to this; last night in Hata when I went out to take a bath, a damn horse ate my beloved new clothes! Dammit to hell!<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taikei* 10, 9. In Edo-period Japan, doctors were not necessarily esteemed as they are today.

<sup>132</sup> Homeless porters is *kumosuke* in the original.

<sup>133</sup> This is an aside by Ikku.

<sup>134</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 112-3. See note 23 on

## EXAMPLE 2

The *hanashi* and *Hizakurige* excerpt that follows make reference to a popular Edo-period style of music and narrative singing, *Bungo bushi*, founded by Miyakoji Bungonojō (d. 1740). The phrase *koto kai na* (trans. could it truly be?) was frequently chanted at the end of *Bungo bushi* passages and the characters below are doing their best imitations of chanters. Perhaps this was as amusing to Edo-period readers/listeners as, say, Americans today screeching a high quality, “Ha! Ooh! Hit me!” in reference to the American funk music legend, James Brown.

“Heavenly Being” (*Tenjin*) in *Strange Tales: Sacred Drum* (*Chinwa gakudaiko*, 1772)<sup>135</sup>

Two provincial samurai are on a pilgrimage to Kannon.

SAMURAI 1: Here we are, offer up your prayers.

SAMURAI 2: Is the one in the middle Kannon?

SAMURAI 1: Yes, of course.

SAMURAI 2: How about the one on the right?

SAMURAI 1: That’s Dainichi.

SAMURAI 2: And the one on the left?

SAMURAI 1: Seishi.

SAMURAI 2: Oh, that’s all?

Finding an image of a heavenly being [*tenjin*] on the ceiling, he speaks up once more.

SAMURAI 2: Hey, that doesn’t look like Kannon to me. Who’s that woman laying down there?

SAMURAI 1: That? It’s a *Bungo bushi* chanter.

SAMURAI 2: Now, I’m not going to buy that one!

SAMURAI 1: You oaf! That honorable figure, could it truly beeeee?<sup>136</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 3.1 (1804)

PROPRIETOR: I’ll pour for you, young man.

KITA: I should eat a little something before having sake.

page 113 for reference to doctors wearing long kappa.

<sup>135</sup> The title refers to the drums used in *kagura* music, but hints at *taikomochi*, professional male companion-entertainers.

<sup>136</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taiki* 9, 40.

PROPRIETOR: So the young man is hungry. Okay, let’s get something in your stomach. Then you’ll be good to go.

KITA: On second thought, I’ll start with something to drink. Thank you, fine, that’ll do. By the way, what kind of soup is this here? Boiled baby sardines and veggies, Senba-style? What’s next, huh? Pumpkin sesame soup and sweet potatoes?

YAJI: Now, let’s not be harsh. Hey, look at these shrimp. When they splash around they look like those heavenly beings [*tenjin*] painted between the cross strips on temple ceilings.

KITA: You mean the *Bungo bushi*? Could it truly beeeee?<sup>137</sup> Or so they say, ha ha ha! Hey old man, let me pour you another.<sup>138</sup>

## EXAMPLE 3

The next *hanashi* and *Hizakurige* excerpt share characters who seek to disgrace members of the outgroup. Humor comes with a twist in which the men initiating conflict are the ones humiliated, an outcome they clearly deserve.

“Idiot Seller of Clam Meat” (*Baka no mukimi*) in *Thousand-ri Wings* (*Senri no tsubasa*, 1773)

When an idiot seller of clam meat comes around and someone calls out, “Idiot!” he responds, “That’s right!” The innkeeper next door hears this and decides to give it a try for himself. He calls out, “Idiot!” and gets the answer, “That’s right!”

INNKEEPER: What a fool! Let’s try it again. Idiot!

SELLER: That’s right, you’re the idiot!

INNKEEPER: Okay, you’ve got me.<sup>139</sup>

“The Idiot Vendor” (*Baka uri*) in *The Six Categories of Joke Tales* (*Otoshibanashi rikugi*, 1797)

This story is virtually the same as *Baka no mukimi*, above.<sup>140</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 4.2 (1805)

<sup>137</sup> The line is also found in part II of Ryūtei Tanehiko’s *Shunjō gidan mizuage-chō*, (ca. 1836).

<sup>138</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 165-6.

<sup>139</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taiki* 9, 219.

<sup>140</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 230 note 1.



YAJI: Hey there gentlemen, I've been listening to you and have been holding my tongue, but just what did you mean by calling us idiots, huh?

TRAVELER: It was nothing to do with you. It concerns us.

YAJI: How do you figure, "it concerns us?" You were blabbing about what happened at the inn last night, right? Yeah, well those so-called idiots who knocked down the sliding door, that was *us*!

TRAVELER: Ah, so, you guys are the idiots?

YAJI: Yeah, we're the idiots.

TRAVELER: Ha ha! We only called you idiots because you *are* idiots! So then, what's the big deal?

YAJI: Ooh, this wise guy's making jokes now!

TRAVELER: Eat crap!

YAJI: Yeah? That's real funny! Go get some and I will!

Yaji is absolutely furious. Not to be beaten, the traveler finds some horse manure and brings it forward on a stick.

TRAVELER: There you are, eat up!

YAJI: No, I hate horse crap!

TRAVELER: How can you say such a thing? Looks like we're going to have to make you eat it!<sup>141</sup>

#### EXAMPLE 4

The following demonstrate a cornucopia of word play. Contemporary readers/listeners probably chuckled at the implausible homonyms (groaners), misunderstandings, forgetfulness, or sheer silliness of characters. Unfortunately, a few references are so dated that it may be difficult for today's readers to find them amusing.

"The Forgetful Bumpkin" (*Inakamono mono no dōwasure*) in *Shika's Paper-wrapped Brush* (*Shika no makifude*, 1686)

A man in his thirties or so comes into town, arriving at the street 3-*chōme*. He walks up to a youth and says he would like to make a simple inquiry. When the youth asks what it is, the man says he would like to call on someone in the area. Asked

the person's name, the man says he forgot. Asked the name of the house, he has forgotten that too. The man is hopeless. When told there is no way of knowing, the man presses further.

MAN: I have traveled quite far, from Mito. If you cannot help me, I'll have no choice but to take the two-day trip back.

Thinking this a pity, the youth asks if there is nothing the man can do remember the name or the person or house. Thinking for some time, the youth speaks up.

YOUTH: There are a number the inns lined up across the way; could it be Matsubaya Arisuke?

MAN: No, neither pine [*matsu*] nor ant [*ari*] ring a bell.

YOUTH: Then, how about Ms. Harima at the Kagamiya?<sup>142</sup>

MAN: That's is not it either. It's something that pricks and stings.

YOUTH: I know! Hachibei of the Igaya?<sup>143</sup>

And so they carry on until they come up with the place he was looking for.<sup>144</sup>

"The Provincial Messenger" (*Inaka no hikyaku*) in *Jewels of Table Coral* (*Eda sango ju*, 1689)

A *hikyaku* messenger is sent on business from the provinces to the estate of a high-ranking man in Kyoto. The name of the noble is difficult to remember, so it is taught to him with a special phrase. HIKYAKU: Yes, yes, I have it.

On his way up to Higashi no Dōin, he passes through Shinzaike, arriving at the gate of Ogawa Castle. There he asks if this would be the residence of a noble. The man standing guard, thinking the inquiry nonsense, begins by asking who the *hikyaku* is looking for.

HIKYAKU: His name sounds like something that flies in the sky.

GUARD: It must be some kind of bird. Could it be Master Asukai?<sup>145</sup>

HIKYAKU: No, that doesn't sound right. It's a

<sup>142</sup> *Hari* is the phonetic equivalent of needle, *kagami* of mirror.

<sup>143</sup> *Hachi* is the phonetic equivalent of bee, *iga* of burr.

<sup>144</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taiki* 5, 208-9.

<sup>145</sup> The first two characters in this name mean to fly and bird, respectively.

<sup>141</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 229-30.

mischievous bird.

GUARD: Master Karasuma?<sup>146</sup>

HIKYAKU: No, it's an even more mischievous bird.

GUARD: Master Takatsukasa?<sup>147</sup>

HIKYAKU: No, more mischievous yet.

GUARD: High Counselor Washinoo?<sup>148</sup>

HIKYAKU: Now that was a *washi* that ceased soaring.<sup>149</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 5.3 (1806)

MAN AT INN: Hello there, need a place for the night? Please, I can set you up here.

YAJI: Hi, is Myōkenmachi far off yet?

WOMAN AT INN: No, it's just a little further down the road.

YAJI: There's supposed to be an inn, something-or-other, in Myōkenmachi, you know, the one that guy from Kamigata we met on the road said he would be lodging at...

No matter how long he thinks about it, Yaji cannot remember that the place is called the Fujiya.<sup>150</sup>

YAJI: Man, it's on the tip of my tongue! It's name sounds like something that hangs down from a trellis... Hey, is there an inn in Myōkenmachi that hangs down?

MAN NEARBY: What! An inn that hangs in mid-air? How's anybody supposed to answer a question like that?

YAJI: I hear you. I can't find out by asking people in these parts. Let's move on and ask someone down the road.

So they [Yaji and Kita] proceed, hurrying along

until they arrive at a sign that reads "*Mankintan*: Yamahara Shichizaemon, Myōkenmachi."<sup>151</sup> They figure this must be the place, so they stop a passerby to ask.

YAJI: Hi there, you got anything with a name that sounds like it might be dangling down?

PASSERBY: What! What the hell's that supposed to mean, something dangling down?

YAJI: An inn, of course.

PASSERBY: Well, what's the name of the place?

YAJI: No, you see, I've forgotten the name.

PASSERBY: Come on, how am I supposed to know if you can't even tell me the name? Look, if it's something dangling down you want, go have a look over where those people are standing, on the corner. Last year somebody hanged himself over there. Now there's something that dangled!

YAJI: Oh good grief! Not something that *used to* dangle!

PASSERBY: Just go on over. That's probably an inn over there too.<sup>152</sup>

#### EXAMPLE 5

Both excerpts below are set on rivers in *sanjukko-ku*—barges used for transporting up to thirty bushels of rice and ferrying people. The passengers are in a comical state of uproar following accidents involving urine. The humor is of a scatological variety, a mainstay of *gesaku*. If this *hanashi* was indeed Ikku's inspiration as some scholars suspect, he spent more time on this adaptation than the ones above.

"The Burdensome Passenger" (*Noriai meiwaku*) in *Great Collection of Early Spring Stories* (*Risshun hanashi taishū*, 1774)

The passengers quiet as night falls on the *sanjuk-koku* ferry. An elderly woman relieves herself in an earthenware pot. She staggers with it as she tries to dispose of it into the river, but catches herself on a

<sup>146</sup> *Karasu* means crow.

<sup>147</sup> *Taka* means hawk.

<sup>148</sup> This name is written with the characters for eagle and tail, respectively. *Washi* means eagle.

<sup>149</sup> It is not clear exactly whom this refers to. One candidate is Washinoo Takakore (1645-84), who died relatively young, a few years prior to the publication of the *hanashibon* this appears in. It could also be a reference to one of several ancestors who also reached the rank of High Counselor (*dainagon*), one being Washinoo Takasuke (1324-1404), who renounced the world by taking the tonsure two years prior to his death at 81.

<sup>150</sup> *Fuji* means wisteria.

<sup>151</sup> *Mankintan* was a medicine taken as a restorative, or for detoxification.

<sup>152</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 319-20. This continues for some time, and, with each new person asked, the scene becomes increasingly absurd.

rush mat and spills it onto the legs of a sleeping passenger. The urine splashes onto him, but he continues sleeping without even taking notice. Thinking it terrible what she has done, she takes out a teacup, scoops water from the river, and pours it on the man's legs to clean them. The man wakes up.

MAN: Hey, this old lady here starts by pouring hot water on me, and now she's pouring cold!<sup>153</sup>

Scene in *Hizakurige* 6.1 (1807)

YAJI: What are you going to do?

KITA: Pee...

YAJI: You gotta go?

KITA: I'm going to throw it up!<sup>154</sup>

YAJI: What! Get over to the side of the boat! Go ahead, stick your head way out there and let 'er go. I'll hold on to you. How's that? Are you done yet? Come on, you can do it... Well, I guess no dog's going to come since this is a river.

KITA: Huh? What dog?

YAJI: Go ahead, I'll call, "here, Whitey, Whitey, Whitey!" for you so you can vomit up the pee.<sup>155</sup>

KITA: You fool... *Gluahh*.

Meanwhile, the old man also vomits, washes his mouth out, and gargles with river water.

OLD MAN: How's that boy doing over there? Is he all right?

KITA: Somehow or other, things are better now.

He rinses his mouth out with a sober look on his face. Yaji does his best to hold back his laughter. Yaji appears on the outside to be a decent fellow, so the old man does not get especially angry.

OLD MAN: Well now, it looks like we've had ourselves quite an incident. We could drink the rest of my *sake* to get the taste out of our mouths, but I don't have anything else to heat it up in. What should we do?"

CHŌMATSU: In that case, here, how about I give you an actual urinal pot to use?

OLD MAN: Well look there, a real urinal. And

cleaner than anything else we've got. Wow, just as you bought it in Fujinomori, not used even once? We'll take it.

KITA: Absurd! That's just too much.

YAJI: Don't be ridiculous. Green tea is good in earthenware pots, and the same will be true for hot *sake* in this urinal.

KITA: How do you expect a guy to drink *sake* out of a piss pot!

YAJI: Fine. Sorry, sir, could we go with the teapot after all?

OLD MAN: I tossed it into the river. This pot is brand new, so it's clean.

With this the old man pours *sake* from the tub into the urinal, and places it on the brazier.

OLD MAN: Chōmatsu, pull out those teacups. Now, here we are, *real sake*! Drink up boys.

He holds a cup out to Yaji, who takes it in his hand.

OLD MAN: Good at turning a blind eye, aren't ya?<sup>156</sup> Here you go, how about some fish? Can you eat *irigara*?

YAJI: Yes, well, what is it?

OLD MAN: It's whale meat with the fat stripped off. I guess we can't really call it *irigara* in that case, though.<sup>157</sup>

YAJI: Wow, fancy stuff. Here Kita, let me pour you one.

Yaji passes his teacup to Kitahachi and proceeds to pour from the urine pot. Kitahachi is now convinced the pot is clean, and therefore no longer worried. He takes the *sake* and gulps it down in one shot.

KITA: I tell you, there's nothing like *sake* that hasn't been mixed with piss. Here, may I pour for you?

OLD MAN: Why don't we share with our friends over there?

With this Kitahachi offers a cup to the man from Echigo, next to him.

ECHIGOITE: Thank you there, don't mind if I do.

He takes the cup and Kitahachi begins to pour.

ECHIGOITE: Isn't that a pot to piss into?

<sup>153</sup> Mutō, *Hanashibon taiki* 10, 236.

<sup>154</sup> Moments earlier, Kita and another passenger accidentally drank *sake* from a teapot that Yaji had urinated into.

<sup>155</sup> Parents encouraged potty-training children to go by calling for dogs with names such as Whitey (*Shiro*) and Blackie (*Kuro*).

<sup>156</sup> Yaji knew well that he should not drink the *sake* (mixed with his own urine) passed around earlier. Now he is more than happy to drink.

<sup>157</sup> Play on *irigara*, which can be phonetically interpreted to mean, "containing (*iri*) outer layer or shell (*kara*)," in this case blubber.

KITAHACHI: Don't worry; it's brand new, so it's clean.

He finishes pouring and the man downs it.

ECHIGOITE: Ah, very good, very good! Now, my brother from Nagasaki, you're next.

He passes along the cup and pours.

NAGASAKIAN: Oh, I'm very sorry, I shouldn't make you...

OLD MAN: Go ahead, keep on passing it down that way.

NAGASAKIAN: Okay, next is you sir!

He goes to pass along the cup, but finds the man next to him looking quite ill, his face pale. He is covered in grime at that. There is gauze wrapped about his neck, and he is leaning on a blanket. He has paid for a four-person space, and is accompanied by an old man who is looking after him.

SICK MAN: I can't drink, so please give a cup to this fellow here.

The cup is passed down to his attendant. Since he just heard the urinal was clean, he downs the *sake* without hesitation.

ATTENDANT: I'm sorry, but could I have you pass that urinal down this way? Maybe I'll just pour one for myself here.

OLD MAN: Please, by all means, have another.

YAJI: Well now, in that case, pass the pisser on down this way.

ATTENDANT: Yes, there you are.

He passes the urinal to Kita, who in turn passes it to Yaji. He fills his cup to the brim and takes it all down in one big gulp, then suddenly hurls his tea-cup.

YAJI: *Ohhhhhhhh*, this can't be happening! *Hu-uhhhhh...*

KITA: What happened?

YAJI: What the hell do you think happened! This isn't *sake*, dammit! It's *piss*!

ATTENDANT: What! I've really done it; I picked up the wrong stale pot and gave you ours! Oh, the *sake*'s right here. Could you pass ours back, please?

KITA: Ha ha ha ha ha! This is *classic*!

YAJI: My god, what should I do now? I could probably handle drinking that much piss, but... Oh, how that sick man reeks! *Gluuuuaahhh! P'tu kha...*

KITA: Ha ha ha ha! Look at that sick man's face! It looks like he has syphilis! Pus is running from his head down the back of his neck!

YAJI: *Oooooohghuuu*, please, stop it! My throat feels like it's going to burst! I can't take it, *gluuah!*

KITA: See, now your going to need to pee *again*! They should really prohibit pissing on boats...<sup>158</sup>

## Addendum II: "The *Nimono* Stop" (*Niuriya*)

NARRATOR: Here we have the two usual suspects, wandering along at their leisure until they arrive at Ise Kameyama. From there they pass through Shōno and Ishiyakushi and come to a fork in the road.<sup>159</sup> They take a right, heading for the Ise Highway. From Kanbe they move on to Shiroko to see the "ever-blooming cherry trees," and from there, they're off to the village of Ueno.<sup>160</sup>

KĪKO: Hey Seiyān, I'm running on empty here. I'm starving!

SEIYAN: Hey, don't say things like that so loud! Have you no shame man? We're Osakans! We don't say things like our stomachs are empty.

KĪKO: That's ridiculous! It doesn't matter if we're from Osaka or some other place. When you're hungry, you're hungry!

SEIYAN: No, listen, you've gotta say it in a way people around these parts won't understand.

KĪKŌ: You mean, say it in code, or something?

SEIYAN: Are you that stupid? We've got plenty of trendy words in Osaka that would be perfect! Come on, say something like this: "My *machsto* is Kitayama! How 'bout we put in the stopper?"<sup>161</sup> If somebody hears you say that, they won't know what to make of it.

KĪKŌ: I don't even know what to make of it!

SEIYAN: I tell you, you're hopeless man. "*Mach-*

<sup>158</sup> Nakamura, *NKBZ* 49, 359-62.

<sup>159</sup> Places leading east-northeast in modern-day Suzuka City, on the Tōkaidō.

<sup>160</sup> These are places leading south-southeast on the Ise Highway, along Ise Bay. Shiroko is famous for *fudan zakura*, (*prunus lennesiana*, in leaf and bud all year, bearing flowers from October to May) and the temple Shiroko Kannon-ji, which boasts a legend about the first tree of this kind. The legend was apparently a model for the nō play *Fudan zakura*. Ueno-mura is modern-day Ise-Ueno.

<sup>161</sup> *Raha ga Kitayama ya, soko irete okōka.*

*sto*” is just “stomach” backwards.<sup>162</sup> When you say “Kitayama,” it just means “empty.”

KĪKŌ: How do you figure?

SEIYAN: Look in the direction of Kitayama on a nice day; it looks wide open, vast, and spacious! That’s why Kitayama means “empty.”

KĪKŌ: So, when we’re full we say “*minami-yama*”?<sup>163</sup>

SEIYAN: I don’t know about that, but for “eating food,” we have to say, “put in the stopper.”

KĪKŌ: So for taking a crap, then, we say, “pull the plug,” right?<sup>164</sup>

SEIYAN: Nobody says anything like *that*! Oh look, perfect! That house over there looks like it might be a *niuriya*. Go over and see how things look.

KĪKŌ: ... Okay, I went over, but it’s no good.

SEIYAN: Why not?

KĪKŌ: They’re closed today.

SEIYAN: No, countryside shops look like they’re closed every day of the year. If you go in, you’ll see they’re open for business.

KĪKŌ: No, they had a sign out front.

SEIYAN: What’d it say?

KĪKŌ: “Won’t make a single thing, emphatic. A various variety we’ve got, but not.”<sup>165</sup>

SEIYAN: What the hell’s that supposed to mean?

KĪKŌ: I think it’s an apology or something. Here, take a look. It’s written right over here.

SEIYAN: You dimwit! It says “Food stop. *Sake*, fish, and much more. The Yanagiya.”<sup>166</sup>

KĪKŌ: Pretty bad writing, huh?

SEIYAN: More like bad *reader*! Go on inside, see if they can make anything for us.

KĪKŌ: Hello! Anybody home?

OLD MAN: Yes, what is it?

KĪKŌ: It won’t be a problem if we come in and have a seat for a while, will it?

OLD MAN: If was a problem, don’t you think I’d already have these stools put away?

<sup>162</sup> *Raha, hara.*

<sup>163</sup> South-mountain. Kitayama is written with two characters, those for north and mountain.

<sup>164</sup> *Soko nuku. Soko ireru* in the previous line.

<sup>165</sup> *Hitotsu senmeshi, shuchō. Iro, iro iro, ariya nakiya.* This is basically nonsense. This translation is one possible interpretation.

<sup>166</sup> *Ichizen meshi. Sake sakana iro iro ari. Yanagiya.*

KĪKŌ: Oh, right... Okay, we’ll have a puff here then.

OLD MAN: It’s your tobacco. Smoke as much as you like.

KĪKŌ: What’ve you got?

OLD MAN: I’ve got a boil on my keister.

KĪKŌ: No! I’m asking if you’ve got anything fired up.<sup>167</sup>

OLD MAN: Oh yeah, plenty. The boards on the back fence are all charred black.

KĪKŌ: That’s not what I mean! I mean, don’t you have anything a little fishy?<sup>168</sup>

OLD MAN: Even worse, we’ve got two cesspits.

KĪKŌ: Cesspits! Don’t you have anything you’ve made, dammit?

OLD MAN: You need straw sandals or something?

KĪKŌ: For the love of... I’m asking you for something *consumable* man!<sup>169</sup>

OLD MAN: The elements have already consumed our stonewall out back. Ready to fall any day, I tell ya.

KĪKŌ: Seiyon!! Would you just get in here?

SEIYAN: Hey hey, okay. Quit your crying already. Watch out... Hey old man, what this guy’s trying to ask is, do you have anything that’ll go good with *sake*. He’s just trying to see if you’ve got anything tasty to eat.

OLD MAN: Oh, was that it? I was wondering what he was thinking asking for all that weird stuff, one thing after the next. And at the end of it all, here he goes and starts bawling. I didn’t know what I was gonna do! Ha-ha. So, anyway, what province do you boys come from?

SEIYAN: See there, Now that’s how you handle these bumpkins. So, old man, come on, what can you make?

OLD MAN: See there on the wall? I can make anything written on that paper.

KĪKŌ: Seiyon, Let me do the reading, okay... uh... yeah. “*Kuchira-ke*,” “*Akae-ke*,” “*Akakai-ke*” “*Tochiyau-ke*...” Hey old man, is this supposed to be some kind of joke?

OLD MAN: Those say *kujira-jiru, akae-jiru, ak-*

<sup>167</sup> *Yaita mono.*

<sup>168</sup> *Kusai* (i.e., *namagusai*) *mono.*

<sup>169</sup> *Kueru mono.*

*agai-jiru*, and *dojō-jiru*, you know...<sup>170</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: Like hell! Those characters say *ke* and you know it!  
 OLD MAN: If they said *ke* they wouldn't have dots for radicals, now would they? See the rest of 'em? They've got dots too, right?<sup>171</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: What radical? Where?  
 OLD MAN: There, on the left side!  
 KĪKŌ: Huh? That little hull there?  
 OLD MAN: What, do characters have hulls now?  
 KĪKŌ: *Dojō-jiru* sounds good. Bring us two bowls of that, and make it quick-curtain.<sup>172</sup>  
 OLD MAN: Very good. Hey old woman, we've gotta make two bowls of *dojō-jiru*. I'm gonna go out and catch some loach. You get into town and pick up some miso.  
 KĪKŌ: Now wait just one minute! You're going fishing for loach? Right now? You think you'll be able to catch some right away?  
 OLD MAN: No problem. There are tons of 'em out there. I'll throw out the trap and they'll be in there waiting for sure, by the time my old lady gets back.  
 KĪKŌ: You said she was going into town to buy miso. Is town nearby?  
 OLD MAN: Just eight-and-a-half miles over those mountains there.<sup>173</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: Hey, hey! There's no way she's going to make it eight miles and back any time soon with old legs like that!  
 OLD MAN: No, you see, we country folk are quite used to the mountain trails here. It doesn't matter how old we get, just give us two days and we'll be fine.  
 KĪKŌ: Oh quit your jabbering! You think we want to shack up here while we wait for miso soup! Fine, bring us whatever, as long as you can do it right now. And hurry up with it.

<sup>170</sup> All types of miso soup. These, in order, are made with whale, red stingray, ark clam, and loach.

<sup>171</sup> Dots is *chobo* in the original.

<sup>172</sup> *Hayamaku de shiten ka*. *Hayamaku* is term born in the kabuki theater. Those who experience kabuki can hardly help being amazed at the swiftness of some opening curtains. *Hayamaku* also came to be used at restaurants, barbershops, etc., to express that one was in a hurry and wanted quick service.

<sup>173</sup> Three *ri* eighteen *chō*. About 14 kilometers.

OLD MAN: All right then, something ready-made? How about *ko-imo*?<sup>174</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: No, those are all slimy and make me sick.  
 OLD MAN: I can bring some *nishin* over.<sup>175</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: Nope, sorry. *Nishin* leaves a bitter taste in my mouth.  
 OLD MAN: *Kazu no ko* is okay, right?<sup>176</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: No, the little eggs get stuck in my cheeks. Sorry.  
 OLD MAN: *Gonbo* no good either?<sup>177</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: Makes my stomach bloat up and I can't stop farting.  
 OLD MAN: How about carrot?  
 KĪKŌ: No, I can't eat those, people will be calling me a pervert.<sup>178</sup>  
 OLD MAN: *Namabushi*?<sup>179</sup>  
 KĪKŌ: Too spendy.  
 OLD MAN: Look, if you're gonna be so tight with your money, you're not going to find *anything* to eat!  
 KĪKŌ: No, I like *namabushi* and all; I just can't have it right now. I can't have meat today because it's a day of abstinence for my late father.  
 OLD MAN: Oh, I'm sorry... Well, if you're abstaining today, I have just the thing. How about some *Kōya-dōfu*? That's vegetarian.  
 KĪKŌ: *Kōya-dōfu*? It's that dry, tasteless stuff, right? Well, if you don't have anything else, I'm just gonna have to deal with it... Oh hey, wait, old man. Would you mind squeezing the juice out of that before bringing it over?  
 OLD MAN: What are you saying? You just said it's dry and tasteless... If I go and squeeze all the juices out, it'll be so desiccated you won't be able to swallow it!  
 KĪKŌ: Don't worry; I'll still eat it. Go ahead, just wring that baby out.  
 OLD MAN: You're sure now? Okay... like this?

<sup>174</sup> Baby taros.

<sup>175</sup> Herring.

<sup>176</sup> Herring roe.

<sup>177</sup> Another term for *gobō* (burdock root).

<sup>178</sup> These are not the Western carrots found in most Japanese dishes today, but red *kintoki* carrots, loaded with nutrients, especially those thought to increase male virility.

<sup>179</sup> Also *namaribushi*, this is *katsuobushi* (smoked, dried bonito) with the process stopped at the smoking stage. It can be sliced with a knife.



KĪKŌ: Hey!! Not on the cutting board with your chopsticks like you're scared of the thing! Just take that sucker in both hands and give it a good twist.

OLD MAN: You sure like to do strange things to your food before eating it... Okay, *there*, How's that?

KĪKŌ: Yeah, good. But... on second thought, it really does look parched now. No, there's no way I'm gonna be able to eat that.

OLD MAN: That's what I told you at the very beginning!

KĪKŌ: I'm sorry, okay? Look, do you think you could just pour a little soup from that *namabushi* over it?

OLD MAN: Aha! So that was your grand scheme, was it? Well, I suppose it'd be all right to spare a little soup. But only soup, you hear? Hey, didn't you say you have abstinence for your father today?

KĪKŌ: That's right. These here were his final words: "What ever you do, be sure to observe days of abstinence. For doing that you can have soup, but only soup, you hear..."

OLD MAN: Some way to abstain! Very well then. I'll just pour some soup on, like so.

KĪKŌ: We appreciate it. Hey, hey! Old man! You know, you really don't have to pick out the little chunks that fall in with the soup. I thought you'd at least let one or two go, but jeez! Looks like you've got no backbone at all.

OLD MAN: No, *you're* the one without a backbone!

KĪKŌ: What's that you're spouting? Okay, if you're gonna talk like that, I'll show you a real man! I'll buy some of your damn *namabushi* after all! Get a slab of that over here!

OLD MAN: This doesn't come in slabs; it comes in slices!

KĪKŌ: Of course it comes in slices... that are way too *thin*!! I want a *slab*! That one there, now that's a good-sized hunk! Go ahead, you gonna heat it up in the pot, or what?

OLD MAN: What are you talking about? I'm cutting you off a slab!

KĪKŌ: Oh, look at you go, you've got some skill! You should really come out to Osaka to slice up the *daikon* radish they use for *sashimi* garnishing. They could use a guy like you back home! I've seen that stuff your slicing in turtle-shell

cuts here and there, but this is the first time I've seen it sliced paper-thin!<sup>180</sup> Hey old man, be careful when you bring it over, if somebody coughs that stuff will be fluttering all over the place.

OLD MAN: Oh quit already, will you? *Namabushi* doesn't flutter about!

KĪKŌ: Listen to him... I bet I could blow from here and send those little shavings he calls slabs flying! Watch how it's done, my friend. One, two, three, *fuuu*! There! Look at it go!

SEIYAN: Yeah, yeah! Gone! It blew away!

KĪKŌ: Yeah, right onto your plate, look!

OLD MAN: *There*! You boys have been served!

KĪKŌ: Oh really? I thought something fell off your hands.

SEIYAN: Hey, we better knock it off, the old man's getting pretty angry. Hey, we want to have a little something to drink, too. Got any *sake*?

OLD MAN: We've got superior brands of *sake* made right here in this village. *Murasame*, *Niwasame*, and *Jikisame*.

KĪKŌ: Strange names for *sake*... How's the *Murasame*?

OLD MAN: Drink it here and you'll fall into a delightful drunken state.

KĪKŌ: Yeah, I think that's the whole idea behind drinking.

OLD MAN: Yep, it gives you a good buzz all right, but the minute you step out of the village the drunkenness wears off.<sup>181</sup>

KĪKŌ: That's not very encouraging *sake*, now is it. Is *Niwasame* any good?

OLD MAN: You sober up the moment you step outside.<sup>182</sup>

KĪKŌ: And *Jikisame*?

OLD MAN: Sobers you up as you drink!<sup>183</sup>

KĪKŌ: Well that's as good as useless. Yeah, old man, I bet you water the *sake* down, don't you?

OLD MAN: No, I mix *sake* in with the water.

<sup>180</sup> *Kamibushi*, a play on *kamebushi*, one type of *katsuobushi* made from the two blocks of meat cut away from a small-sized bonito's spine. When processed it resembles a turtle shell.

<sup>181</sup> *Mura* means village. *Same(ru)* means to sober up.

<sup>182</sup> *Niwa* means yard, or garden.

<sup>183</sup> *Jiki* means right away, immediately.

KĪKŌ: Old man, you sure are an artful one.<sup>184</sup>

OLD MAN: I'd say I'm a heart-full one.<sup>185</sup>

KĪKŌ: There you go turning things around on us again! Fine, whatever, bring over the best *sake* you've got.

NARRATOR: So there you have it, after a spell of pouring cups and receiving cups, our two usual suspects find themselves in a fine drunken state.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> *Mizukusai sake*. Literally, alcohol that reeks of water. *Mizukusai* is also an expression for one who is standoffish, reserved, coldhearted, or secretive.

<sup>185</sup> *Sakekusai mizu*. Literally, water that reeks of liquor, which I chose to leave out of the translation.

<sup>186</sup> This translation is based on a transcription in the 1938 magazine *Kamigata hanashi* (vol. 25), reprinted in Shōkaku Shōfukutei V, ed., *Kamigata hanashi (jōkan)*, (Tokyo: San'ichi shobō, 1971) 611-14. Shōfukutei Shōkaku V (1884-1950) and Katsura Yonedanji IV (1896-1951) ran *Kamigata hanashi* out of the "Rakugo Cottage" (*Rakugo sō*), which was actually Shōkaku V's own home. These men were the masters of post-WWII Kamigata rakugo greats Shōfukutei Shōkaku VI (1918-1986) and Katsura Beichō III (1925-), respectively.